

6 WAYS  
to KEEP  
the "GOOD" in  
YOUR BOY

---

Guiding Your Son from  
His Tweens to His Teens



BOB & DANNAH GRESH

*Author of Six Ways to Keep the "Little" in Your Girl*

“With two sons of our own, Jean and I can certainly attest to the challenges raising boys can bring! Dannah and Bob offer parents a fascinating look into the development of tween and teen boys, as well as a wealth of practical, hands-on musts for successfully connecting with them.”

—**Jim Daly**, president, Focus on the Family

“Boys are not being championed like they used to be. Don’t believe me? A girl will be praised for wearing a T-shirt that says: ‘Girls rule the world,’ but a boy would be shamed for wearing ‘Boys rule the world.’ Now is the perfect time to pick up Dannah Gresh’s book to champion the next generation of boys. Your son needs you to be his guide, coach, and cheerleader. The six ways outlined in this book work—I’ve tried them with my own son. I highly recommend this book!”

—**Arlene Pellicane**, author of *Screen Kids* and *Parents Rising*, host of *The Happy Home* podcast

“Dannah has done a fabulous job addressing many of the issues that concern our boys! I highly recommend her insights, biblical instruction, and practical mom application. These pages are marching orders...it’s time to fight for the good in our boys!”

—**Angela Thomas**, bestselling author and speaker

“*It’s a boy!*’ I’ve heard the doctor make that announcement four times. As the mother of all sons, I know little boys *want* to be good. I also know how many messages are coming their way that are contrary to God’s Word. In *Six Ways to Keep the ‘Good’ in Your Boy*, Bob and Dannah Gresh celebrate boyhood and cast a vision for parenting boys that is practical and exciting. Whether your boy is still a bundle or teetering on the teen years, this book is for you. You’ll find every page loaded with hope that you can raise a good boy who loves and serves a good God.”

—**Erin Davis**, author, Bible teacher, and mom of four boys

“*Six Ways to Keep the ‘Good’ in Your Boy* provides valuable information and points out positive ways to channel all that testosterone-induced male energy. If you have a boy, this is a book you must read!”

—**Mary Kassian**, bestselling author and speaker

“Every mom wants her little boy to grow to be a caring and courageous man. The truth is, she can either be his ally on that journey to manhood, or she can hinder his progress. Thankfully, Dannah Gresh has sound, practical wisdom for moms who want their sons to be the men God made them to be.”

—**Bob Lepine**, author and radio personality

“*Six Ways to Keep the ‘Good’ in Your Boy* is full of invigorating Scripture, relatable stories, wisely curated science, and practical application to make the most of our sons’ childhoods while preparing them for the future. The first edition was helpful and effective when my teenagers were young, but now I have four more children ten and under, and I don’t want to miss the opportunity to nurture them well. Just when I was feeling weary, distracted, and overwhelmed, the revised edition of this book jolted me awake (in a good way) with a renewed vision for the impact I can have on my precious children. I feel motivated to keep a warm heart and equipped to make wise choices. Oh, God’s amazing grace—I’m excited to begin again!”

—**Laura Booz**, author of *Expect Something Beautiful*

6 WAYS  
to KEEP  
the "GOOD" in  
YOUR BOY

Guiding Your Son from  
His Tweens to His Teens

BOB & DANNAH GRESH



HARVEST HOUSE PUBLISHERS  
EUGENE, OREGON

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version® NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Verses marked NLT are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60188. All rights reserved.

Verses marked NKJV are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Verses marked NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible®, © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)

Cover design by Bryce Williamson

Cover photos © Pressmaster / Shutterstock; Ekaterina Romanova / Getty Images

Interior design by KUHN Design Group

For bulk, special sales, or ministry purchases, please call 1 (800) 547-8979.

Email: [Customerservice@hhpbooks.com](mailto:Customerservice@hhpbooks.com)

**M** is a federally registered trademark of the Hawkins Children's LLC. Harvest House Publishers, Inc., is the exclusive licensee of the trademark.

True Girl is a registered trademark of Dannah Gresh.

### **Six Ways to Keep the "Good" in Your Boy**

Copyright © 2012 by Bob and Dannah Gresh

Published by Harvest House Publishers

Eugene, Oregon 97408

[www.harvesthousepublishers.com](http://www.harvesthousepublishers.com)

ISBN 978-0-7369-8197-2 (pbk.)

ISBN 978-0-7369-8198-9 (eBook)

The Library of Congress has cataloged the edition as follows:

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Gresh, Dannah.

Six ways to keep the "good" in your boy / Dannah Gresh.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-7369-4579-0 (pbk.)

ISBN 978-0-7369-4580-6 (eBook)

1. Mothers and sons—Religious aspects—Christianity. 2. Child rearing—Religious aspects—Christianity. 3. Sons—Religious life. I. Title.

BV4529.18.G745 2012

248.8'45—dc23

2011030820

**All rights reserved.** No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, digital, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

**Printed in the United States of America**

22 23 24 25 26 27 28 / VP / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# A GOOD WORD FOR THEIR GOODNESS GOES TO...

Like most books, this one wasn't written alone. There were a lot of people expressing their love to me in the form of goodness as defined in this book. Thanks to...

Kelly Nebel, who was the first to do any work on this book. She is a research geek. (Takes one to know one.) She rolled up her sleeves and is the reason that this book communicates intelligently! In the middle of this, she got married. May she and Mark produce many good boys!

Suzie Rothgeb, who followed God's heart to offer to edit. While we were in the middle of writing this book, God spoke to Bob and me about resting and tending to our own family. How would I do that with a book to edit and a deadline to meet? Suzie emailed me out of the blue and asked if she could help. What an answer to prayer and what a great editor! The Christian publishing industry has just found its next great critical thinker!

Harvest House Publishers, who just make me feel so welcomed. While I was writing this, Terry Glaspey and Larae Weikert actually trekked out to central Pennsylvania, and we had some stimulating conversations about how to craft critical pieces of this message. What a treasure that day was. Paul Gossard, editor extraordinaire, made certain that our thinking actually did make sense. It was a privilege to partner

with him when he walked this earth. When we revised this book, Barb Sherrill and Gene Skinner lovingly took up the baton. I am so grateful for them.

Eileen King, my assistant, who is so notably full of goodness that I would not survive writing deadlines without her. Thank you for making my life more manageable and organized.

But mostly, thanks goes to my family: Bob, who wrote this one with me. Lexi and Autumn, for patience when your mom had a deadline to meet. And especially, Robby Gresh. I've been thankful to God for him from the moment I first held him. His goodness humbles me every day.

# CONTENTS

Foreword . . . . .	9
Introducing the Six Ways . . . . .	11

## **PART ONE: BECOMING A CONNECTING MOM**

1. Is There a Mouse in That Cookie Box? . . . . .	23
2. A Mom's Greatest Fears . . . . .	35
3. Becoming a Connecting Mom . . . . .	49
4. Why Connecting Matters . . . . .	59
5. How Connecting Forms Values . . . . .	67
6. Warning: Male Brain on Testosterone Straight Ahead . . . . .	73

## **PART TWO: SIX WAYS TO KEEP THE "GOOD" IN YOUR BOY**

7. Way #1: Get Him Outside to Play . . . . .	87
8. Way #2: Give Him a Book so He Can Discover a Real "Call of Duty" . . . . .	103
9. Way #3: Host Wing Nites and Fantasy Football Parties . . . . .	123
10. Way #4: Celebrate His Entrance into Manhood . . . . .	143
11. Way #5: Unplug Him from a Plugged-In World . . . . .	163
12. Way #6: Let Him Open the Car Door for You . . . . .	179
Conclusion: Fast-Forward 20 Years . . . . .	197
Bonus Section: Seeing the Gift of ADD and ADHD . . . . .	207
Notes . . . . .	213





# FOREWORD

by Rob Gresh

I received an email from my mom with the manuscript of this book attached, asking me to look it over and make sure I was okay with everything she shares about me. I read it through and then replied, “It’s really good, and you make me look pretty good, so you can keep everything.” She then replied, “I don’t make anybody look good. You *are* good. I’m proud of you.”

This may not seem that significant to you, but it meant a lot to me. My mom is always encouraging me, whether through an occasional text or email or a basket full of snacks during finals week. That said, my parents have never been afraid to tell me when I can do better, and they have always delivered those messages with love.

When I was younger, I thought I had the best parents in the world. I assumed that all kids must feel the same way about theirs. As I grew older, I realized that my relationship with my mom and dad was special. Other kids often didn’t share the love and respect with their parents that I share with mine. And I think that most students in college can identify a few things that they would like to do differently with their kids than their parents did with them. When my mom asked me what I wish she and Dad had done differently, I honestly couldn’t think of anything significant. My parents aren’t perfect, and they wouldn’t want

me to tell you that they are, but I really feel they are incredible. They set a great example for me every day. They encourage me. They know the difference between "you're doing it all wrong" and "you can do better." And most important, they have always made it clear that they love me. I'm not sure what I could do differently, but I will be thrilled if I am as good a parent to my kids as my parents are to me.

Will reading this book help you become a better parent? Only if a personal training session with Michael Jordan will make you a better basketball player. (That means, *Absolutely!*) So read it and apply what you learn, and your son will thank you later. He might even write you a nice foreword one day.

*Rob Gresh*

# INTRODUCING THE SIX WAYS

by Bob Gresh

**M**y first memory of being a dad is of swaddling up my son. I would wrap him so tightly that the blankets could not possibly come loose. Then I'd put his tiny head in the palm of my hand and place his body along my forearm so his bum and tightly wrapped tootsies were right at my elbow. I carried him one-handed, just like I did the football when I played flag football in high school.

I'm not sure that's the proper way to hold a baby.

I could have given so much more confident advice to fathers before I was one. When Dannah and I were still dating, we dreamed about being great parents. Ours would be the home where all the kids wanted to hang out. And it was, but the reality show of our lives ended up being so much more twisty-turny, complicated, heart-wrenching... and I should add, ultimately joyful... than I could have ever imagined. It was surprising to find out just how much salt was needed to go with the words I'd eventually eat.

But that's kind of been the story of our lives. Dannah and I are ordinary people who have made a lot of common mistakes in the journey of life. If you've read any of her books, you know that a particular passion in our lives is to encourage the church to live in purity

and to experience marriage as a picture of Christ and his bride, the church. Sadly, these two things are under attack from the enemy, and the church often looks more like a bloodied soldier than a beautiful bride. Dannah and I have been no exception.

I made it to my wedding bed a virgin. Sadly, I did not make it there pure. And you might be surprised how old I was when the enemy swooped in to start the battle of my life.

I remember the day well, though it happened over 40 years ago. The attic was thick with heat. Dust particles floated in the rays of the sun that slipped through the rafters. I could smell mothballs. My mind reeled with confusion.

I'd stumbled onto porn. One quick glance at the cover enticed me to look more closely. A desire was awakened that I'd never known before. So I looked. I looked at her. She was beautiful. Naked. Curvy. I wanted so very much to look—so why was everything in me screaming no?

I could never have imagined that anything that looked so good could make me feel so bad.

I was 12.

This battle became ongoing. No one told me what to do with it, so I lost the war for a long time. Until someone began to walk beside me and teach me how to win.

Today the Internet insidiously seeks to introduce our sons—yours and mine—to this same battle, but much earlier. And there are other battles: aggressive girls, emasculation from the culture, gaming addiction, and the rising prevalence of ADD in boys, to name a few. We have to be ready to help our boys win.

We'd like to help you do just that! It's why we've written this book and after nearly 20 years of growing a ministry for moms and daughters, we finally launched *Born to Be Brave* just a few years ago. Through live events, father-son discipleship boxes, and more, we seek to walk beside the favorite men in your life.

Dannah and I have made it a core value of our ministry to never write or speak about something we haven't yet lived out. We refused to

write about raising tweens, teens, or young men and women until we'd been through the stage. That was one of the best decisions of our lives.

Our son is now married to a beautiful woman, Aleigha. And they are now beautifully parenting two daughters of their own. Twins! Addie and Zoe.

After completing an undergrad degree, Robby was recruited by Penn State University to participate in their grad program. He completed a master's degree and was well into the work needed to complete his PhD when God called him to leave. Today he is investing his life into high school students at Grace Prep, the school Dannah and I founded many years ago. I could not be prouder.

Frankly, Robby was easy to raise. He came out compliant, with a heart to please others. I remember a time when Dannah overheard one of his teenage sisters telling someone about him, "He's just good. He's as good a person as you will ever meet!"

And so he is.

### CLICK HERE!

*Raising a Modern-Day Knight* by Robert Lewis is basically the second-best book (after the Bible) when it comes to raising boys. It's best used by Dad, but Mom could glean a lot from it.

I think we can write to you with some credibility about how to keep the good in your boy. We've done it. (But remember, he *came out* compliant. We can't take all the credit, nor would we try. And we don't want you to think your strong-willed boy can be anything less than good.) With God's help and his daily patience with us, we have achieved something we greatly desired—something you too probably desire if you're reading this book.

Speaking of this book, I'm writing my parts of this book upon a

pressing deadline. That's the only way those of us with ADD (attention deficit disorder) can do it. Extreme pressure creates extreme focus. You'll notice that the sections and chapters that I write are a bit...well, variant...in topic. They're also funnier because—if you have an ADD boy, you know we're entertaining! (Can I just put a word in to say that even someone with ADD can be "good"? You haven't failed as a parent because other kids sit so quietly, do their homework without excessive parental reminders, and then remember to hand it in! We've included a special appendix just for those of you whose battles are made more interesting because of ADD. But know this: *Your* son can be "good"!)

I also write with humility. The point of this book is the biblical goal of instilling goodness into your boy. Even though we've raised our son to be good, he has many years ahead of him in his perilous journey as a man. He's got a lot of years to live it out. I'm mindful of that as I write about him with gratefulness and a father's heart of pride.

Dannah and I will make this promise to you as we write: We will admit the mistakes we made and the regrets we have, for there are so many things we would have done differently. So many places we failed.

So many times, I compared myself to that mythical perfect father. Actually, he's apparently not mythical—he's been well documented in many parenting books through the years. I crumbled when I read books describing fathers who never missed a night of praying for their child...or praying on their knees with their child each day...or for 20 years before they were born. Oh, how I wish I could have done that! How I wish I had responded with biblical patience each time my aggravation level exceeded my ability to respond with a life-changing Bible verse or at least a quote from C.S. Lewis, Augustine, or even the founder of Chick-fil-A.

I am flawed.

And just as important, I am unique. After all, did Augustine ever surprise his kids with a pet peacock? Or dive into a baptismal pool and tear his Achilles?

I'll bet not.

After all, Augustine didn't even have kids. (Picture me smiling.)

If you're a mom reading this book, you may be wondering what

you've gotten yourself into now that we've met. Well, after *Six Ways to Keep the "Little" in Your Girl* scratched an itch that moms just couldn't reach, Dannah was asked to pen this book on raising tween boys. As she began the process, she quickly realized two things.

**First, it takes a man to raise a boy.** (My wife is smart!) So she asked me to join her on this project so that you can confidently hand this book to your man. He will be able to trust what's written here because it's been approved by someone who knows that a Hail Mary is not just something you pray if you're a Catholic, and that a Fu Manchu is something you grow on your face. These are important qualifications when you're taking advice from someone about manhood. So, in between Dannah's great research and expertise, you'll get a good dose of me and my ADD whims. Watch for sidebars and Random Bob Thoughts, which show up looking like this:

### RANDOM BOB THOUGHT:

If you want to get your man to read this with you, don't ask him! Instead, tell him some guy with ADD is writing about Hail Marys and Fu Manchus and you need help translating.

**Second, a lot of you won't have a man with whom you can share this book.** More important, you don't have a man who can share in raising your boy. While Dannah's book on raising girls didn't create as great a need for the wisdom of a single mom, this one does. So Dannah called Angela Thomas, who is a nationally known speaker and the author of several bestselling books, including *My Single Mom Life*. (Incidentally, Angela is now married. And we rejoice with her, but she spent many years raising kids on her own.) My wife spent some time with her as she wrote this book, and she's in love with her. She came home in that excited "I-just-spent-a-lot-of-time-getting-revved-up-by-



girlfriend-talk-so-sit-down-and-let-me-tell-you-every-detail" mood. I have a feeling that if you don't already love Angela Thomas, you will by the end of this book—single mom or not.

And hopefully, you'll still like me too!

So, let's get on to the task of keeping the "good" in our boys.

—*Bob Gresh*

Cofounder of Born to Be Brave,  
borntobebrave.com

**A FEW THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW  
ABOUT SIX WAYS TO KEEP THE “GOOD”  
IN YOUR BOY BY DANNAH GRESH**

1. This book is not meant to be a comprehensive overview of parenting boys...or even parenting **tween boys**. My area of study is primarily in the field of sexuality, gender, and related topics. What I hope to bring to your parenting toolbox is specific skills to raise a tween boy to become a man of integrity and honor. I'll introduce the “six ways” that make this achievable and give you specific, creative ideas to introduce them.

2. If you're a mom, you're the person I'm writing this book for. I'm seeking to help you strengthen your mother-son relationship, specifically during the years just preceding adolescence. These are really important years for your relationship with your son, and I'll share a lot of ideas for how a mother can affirm a boy's entrance into manhood.

But what makes writing this book so terribly challenging is that it takes a man to build a man. A father's role becomes more critical during the tween years. As I've written this book, I've been careful to include tips, with Bob's help, on how you can encourage your son's dad—even if he is not your spouse. While I won't cover the father-son relationship in depth, I do want you to understand how your relationship with your son intersects with the one he'll have with his dad.

3. The research in this book is scientifically valid no matter what your belief system is, but I'll write from a Judeo-Christian perspective. I can't really separate my advice in parenting from my own personal goal to raise children who make choices that are

in conformity to God's written standard of truth, the Bible. That will be apparent as I write, but many of the thinkers who have shaped my parenting in the area of honor, integrity, and purity would be considered "far left" politically and perhaps secular humanist in their worldview. I respect them, and they've brought great insight to my parenting. When it comes to raising boys who will be good men, we can find a lot of common ground. I hope you'll find that to be true as you read this, even if you don't share my perspective on life.

**4. There are exceptions to many things I write in this book.** For example, when I say that most tween and teen boys desperately need physical activity outside to release all the aggression that testosterone creates, I mean just that. *Most!* Not all. Throughout the book, I'll be letting you know what the norms are in terms of readiness for talking to your son about sex or introducing him to dangers on the Internet. I might suggest a parenting skill that will help him to clarify his sense of purpose—very important for boys—or deal with his obsession with gaming, but that doesn't mean it's going to work for your child. Every child is unique. There are also boys who need special individual care and counseling. So please don't use this book as a fail-proof answer to your son's needs.

**5. The goal of this book is not to guarantee your son's integrity and sense of honor, but to help you to be faithful to do your part to protect those things.** I'm not writing a how-to guide where we use canned rules and step-by-step instructions to create a generation of legalistically raised super-sons. There exists no single set of parenting methods that guarantee a specific outcome. It is ultimately through God's grace that

the values of integrity, self-control, and respect have been crafted into our son, Robby. But God gave him to us with the expectation we would teach him moral values that help him to be physically, emotionally, and spiritually whole.

With that responsibility in mind, we studied the work of respected family teachers, family therapists, and even the work of some non-Christian thinkers whose research we found to be intellectually honest. I wanted to consistently apply sound principles in the moral development of all three of our children, and I'm delighted with the results. Bob and I feel like faithful parents. If this book helps you achieve that, it will have done its job.

**6. Faithful parents still must often apply grace to children who don't embrace moral values.** I can't promise that putting everything in this book into practice will guarantee that your son will be a self-sacrificing, community-minded, and porn-free teenager. Faithful parents often find themselves aching over their children's struggles or outright defiance. You see, rebellion has existed since the beginning of time where, amid the perfect paradise of the Garden of Eden, two that walked with a perfect Father rejected his ways. Since then we haven't stopped repeatedly turning away from his goodness.

Therefore, be ready at all stages of parenting to give grace. Just as your 2-year-old threw a fit in public and needed grace, your 16-year-old may create a scene that needs much grace, and your 21-year-old may test the faith you worked so hard to plant within him. Apply grace. Ultimately, that's what our Father God does for us each day, isn't it?