

GED_S01E28_The_Good_Enough_Dad_Graham

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Anonymous female voice: [00:00:02] A LiSTNR Production.

Maggie Dent: [00:00:04] This podcast was recorded on the ancient lands of the Gadigal peoples of the Eora nation in Australia. I wish to acknowledge their rich and continuing culture, and especially pay respect to the elders past, present and emerging, and to acknowledge and pay respect to any First Nations people from anywhere in the world who may come to hear this podcast. We hope that we may all come to walk with gentle feet, strong minds and compassionate hearts in this global village.

Maggie Dent: [00:00:35] No dad wants to be a lousy dad. Aiming to be a good dad is great. But you know what? Being a good enough dad is so much more important. I'm Maggie Dent, parenting educator and author and champion of boys and men. And this is The Good Enough Dad, where I chat with committed, caring, sometimes confused, and often funny dads about all the ways they've discovered to be good enough at this parenting gig. My Good Enough Dad today is Graham Long.

Anonymous male voice: [00:01:08] Um, thank you for everything, Graham. Thank you for being the person you are. Um, if it wasn't for you, I'd probably still be a junkie in the streets living off heroin. Um, you taught me to everything about love over hate. Um, and gave me a whole different aspect to look at life. Thank you so much for everything you've done for me.

Maggie Dent: [00:01:29] That's one of the many visitors to the Wayside Chapel saying thank you and goodbye to Graham at his retirement. The Wayside Chapel is a special church in inner Sydney, where it was created to support people who struggle with hard times. Graham retired in 2018 after serving as pastor at the Wayside Chapel. It's in Sydney's Kings Cross for roughly 14 years. He now resides in Batemans Bay with his wife Robyn and close to his five grandchildren Payton, [00:02:00] Georgie, Marley, Harper and Flynn. Hi, Graham, welcome to The Good Enough Dad.

Graham Long: [00:02:07] Thank you, it's lovely to be here.

Maggie Dent: [00:02:09] Can you give us an idea of what some of your family gatherings are like in your home?

Graham Long: [00:02:14] Uh, Christmas has been for us. Always at Wayside. There's no family Christmas at Wayside it's just a rather chaotic, happy, crazy day that ends by seeing street people dancing in the street. And if that doesn't do things for you, there's, you know, you've had a personality bypass or something. So that has been Christmas, which has been wonderful. But we haven't had these family gatherings. And so this Christmas we had the grandchildren and their parents and my daughter and her husband, and they stayed overnight. And we have a smallish home. It's lovely. I think there's a blessing in having a smallish home, but it meant we had bodies all over the floor and you get up in the morning stepping over all of these precious people who are still yet to wake up. And, you know, as the kids did wake up, they just naturally played together. And it was lots of, Uno, and lots of making Lego games. And, and I took a video of just a sweep of the. So my daughter in law and my daughter were gas bagging about stuff that they gasbag about, you know, important things like the price of something or other and, you know, it was just lovely. And I thought, well, we've had family gatherings, but not a Christmas family gathering for 20 years or so. And I thought, well, I'm a lucky man if I, if I don't see another Christmas. I've seen a good one this, this last Christmas.

Maggie Dent: [00:03:58] Tell me, where did you grow [00:04:00] up? And can you paint a picture of your childhood?

Graham Long: [00:04:03] My father was a minister, a Minister of Religion, and in those days churches moved ministers on every couple of years. And so I thought it was something to do with every time mum fell pregnant, we moved house and I thought, if she just stop getting pregnant, we'd we could be stable for a while. And the result of that is I never really and have still not really attached to a place because we just moved a lot. I felt secure with mum and dad, it was a good, chaotic, big family. My dad was in country Victoria for a while. There were no such thing as social workers. There was no such thing. Trust me, social work itself was in its infancy. And so if the police picked up a woman and kids and had nowhere to put them for the night, they would take them to the local pastor. And so it was not unusual in my childhood to wake up and step over

bodies of people I'd never seen before on the way to the breakfast table. That's just what life was. So I didn't attach to a place. And even now, I love this little home we're in. But the key thing is, really, if Robin's there, I can be at home. So if we move from here again someplace else, as long as as long as Robin's there, I'll be all right.

Maggie Dent: [00:05:26] Oh. That's beautiful.

Maggie Dent: [00:05:32] Now you're the second eldest of five children, so there must have been some mischief that you would have got up to. Do you remember?

Graham Long: [00:05:40] Oh, look, the mischief was never ending in a way. You know, it's just in the Bible, they talk about spiritual gifts. And I think making mischief has to be listed in there somewhere. Because my parents collected strays, a bit like some people collect teaspoons, we always had extras. [00:06:00] I barely remember when it was just five of us. So there'd be some kids who were stranded from somewhere, and they had a talent for introducing mischief we'd never heard of.

Maggie Dent: [00:06:11] Give me an example. Come on, tell me one of those sorts of things that you learnt?

Graham Long: [00:06:17] Well, special skills like smoking, saying rude words we hadn't heard of yet and, you know, all that kind of thing. And my older brother was kind of born a bit confrontive and my next younger brother down, has all of his life turned confrontation into an art form. And I was the opposite. I was always, oh jeez, I can see this. I can see a confrontation coming. So I'd duck and weave and dodge and dash, you know, like in our teenage years, dad would say, now you make sure you're home by ten. My older brother would say, well, I'm not doing that. And I'd think, mate, where did you learn your strategy from? That's ridiculous. You know, I'd say to dad, absolutely I'll be home by ten and I'd get home at 12 or 1 or whatever it was. And I'd just say to him, well, you know, I was bailed up by a bunch of thugs who tried to get me to renounce my Christian faith, but I stood firm.

Maggie Dent: [00:07:16] So you had the gift of the gab?

Graham Long: [00:07:20] Well, I had the gift of seeing it coming long before it didn't, and dodging and dashing. And you know what? In a way, I kind of regret that gift because my older brother and my youngest next down brother were confronting dad regularly. But at his, at our funeral I thought, well, you met him and I really spent most of my time avoiding him, and I was a bit sorry about my finding the easiest way around things in the end. You know, when I was trained for ministry. [00:08:00] You know, following in dad's footsteps, you might say. But he and I were never alike. And theologically, Lordy, you know, we weren't on the same page. You know, we'd get onto a theological subject and I knew where he stood. It wasn't hard to work out where he stood on anything, really, and I'd just avoid it. You know, I'd duck and weave and dodge and dash, whereas my next brother down, he would walk in and his opening statement would be, how did you believe shit like this? You know, and so they would be locked into some great theological battle and I'd be saying, you, you know, you're mad. Why? This is not going to go anywhere.

Maggie Dent: [00:08:41] So, Graham, I'm going to suggest those combative brothers of yours are roosters. Like they're the big alpha male gutsies going to take anyone on. But you were more of a lamb, and lambs are the ones that don't have to push all the boundaries, and they're the ones often that are comfortable having a tender heart. And then doesn't it lead you into your work later? You know, love over fear? And so your dad may have been teaching you that fear has a place maybe back then, but that you learnt a different pathway to caring for others. It's just a thought.

Graham Long: [00:09:14] There's something about that thought which is close to the bone, really. And I guess that contrast describes my mother and father as well. Mum was a compassionate, soft lady and people would say to me all the time, you're like your mother, but I'm so grateful for both of them.

Maggie Dent: [00:09:37] Yep.

Graham Long: [00:09:37] And it is true that I've my path was more determined by my mum than my dad, I think.

Maggie Dent: [00:09:44] So your dad was pretty tough, and he, he was possibly a little combative like your brothers. But can you think of something you learned from your dad that was helpful for you when you stepped into being a dad yourself?

Graham Long: [00:09:58] Dad's a bit of a conundrum to me [00:10:00] in lots of ways. I find myself in my old age saying some things that are him, and much to my surprise, I think, oh my God, it's in here. It's in me somehow. Dad was a fellow who who believed in truth. He would say, just because you can't know it absolutely doesn't mean to say there isn't absolute truth. And because that was his outlook, deception and lies were like a trigger for him, you know. It meant that he, his word was completely bankable. So if he said he was going to see you tomorrow at 3:00, he could be in a car accident at 2:00 and I promise you still be there. If his word said he was going to be there. He walked in home once and his shoes were torn to pieces and he was limping. And I said to him, what? What on earth happened to you? He said, well, I was on my way to do a sign up for a wedding, and I got hit by a car off my little motorbike. And, um, the ambulance came and asked me, you know, what day it was and who was the prime minister. And and they wanted to take me to hospital. And I said, no, I've got an appointment at three and I'm going to keep it. And he did. He wouldn't receive medical attention because he had an appointment. And so he kept the appointment. And he eventually got home looking like he'd been through the wringer. But he kept his word and that's, that's who he was. It's always who he was. He would do lots of things for which there was no standing ovation anywhere, but he'd given his word and so you could bank on it. I hope some of that has rubbed off on me. I don't think my word was as bankable as his, and I regret that.

Maggie Dent: [00:11:57] And of course, you know, when you're a pastor [00:12:00] of flock, you you're caring for others. So was he around as much as you would have liked looking back, is that something that you might have wanted to change?

Graham Long: [00:12:11] Yes, he was, he was insanely involved in whatever it was he was doing, and I think it was one of his regrets towards the end of his life that he was so unavailable at home. I remember once my sister telling him that when she was a little girl, she would sit outside of his study for hour after hour hoping he would come out, and I think that cut him in half. I also think it was true. I think he was so focused on what he was doing. Dad's a funny bloke. He was a fellow who, unless you asked to engage with

him, he didn't really engage. This is not absolutely true, but it's somewhat true that he didn't seek to impose himself upon you. But if you asked him directly to connect with him, he was there. He was intelligent. He was awake. He was with you, and he was passionate about whatever it was. And then that little episode would end and he was disengaged again. Well, disengaged may not be the right word, I think engaged with whatever else it is, the grand scheme of things that he was involved in trying to save the world. So he was, he was a funny man and in a way, he believed in a degree of disengagement, in a way that hit my young ears as horrifying. And in my old age, I'm beginning to think he had some wisdom that I didn't harvest. You know, he would say things that I would think were terrible. I remember him saying to my younger siblings, things like, if you lay down with dogs, you'll get up with fleas.

Maggie Dent: [00:13:57] I've heard that one.

Graham Long: [00:13:58] And yeah. [00:14:00] Well, as a young man, I thought. Well, you you were just of another world because you don't get it. And that's the most terrible thing to say.

Graham Long: [00:14:12] But now that I'm an old bloke myself, I would say for people like me there is a problem with intimacy that's too quick and a life of relationships that are in one sense too close, too quickly, brings its own dramas and own heartache. And I think in some ways, what my father was saying to me was healthy relationships have distance as well as connection. You know, there's a time to push people away. And say it another way, when somebody gets too close, they can't see you anyway. They're too close.

Graham Long: [00:14:57] In order to see them, they need to step back. So I think dad, in his own way, was trying to teach that, that relationships are constant, kind of working out what the distance should be.

Maggie Dent: [00:15:17] So Graham when you and Robin realised you couldn't conceive naturally, you decided to adopt. First you adopted James and then Mandy several years later. Can you tell me about the first time that you picked up your boy James?

Graham Long: [00:15:33] When we found out I was infertile, I thought, great, we'll just be rich, you know, because, you know, having children seems to be a guarantee of poverty to me. But Robin was utterly, she never wavered, we were going to adopt children. And I went into this thinking, well, okay, it's what you want. I didn't feel it. [00:16:00] I thought I could love all the rest of the world without having to adopt children.

Graham Long: [00:16:04] Anyway, the time came. It was quite a long process, and I worked for the department that vetted people for adoption at the time. Then one day I got a phone call from the department, from somebody I knew saying, you've just had a baby. And I thought, well, I better ring Robin and tell her we've just had a baby. So I did, and at the time I was working for the welfare department in South Australia, and we were based up at the Riverland. So I called Robin, and Robin had prepared a room a long time ago. We had bassinets and all sorts. So I got her and we went down to Adelaide that same day, I think, and the early next morning we went to pick up this child. And in some ways adoption is the weirdest process. Look, in some ways it's a bit like getting petrol. You know, you walk in with an empty bassinet, they fill her up and you walk out. You're a parent. And so that's kind of weird.

Maggie Dent: [00:17:08] Never thought of it like that before.

Graham Long: [00:17:10] Well, it's odd. It's just odd. You've been pregnant for four years, and suddenly, bingo! Here's this baby. But we were ushered into the Matron's office. She was lovely. She asked us what the name of the little boy was going to be, and we said, James.

Graham Long: [00:17:28] After whatever she said to us, and I can't remember any of it, whatever she said to us, we were ushered out into a room that had maybe a half a dozen hospital cots and one baby, and we walked over to the baby and the nurse said to me, would you like to pick up your son? And in that moment, my my life changed. I didn't anticipate you know what this was going to [00:18:00] do to me. But as I picked him up, I suddenly knew I wanted to be a man worthy of this little boy. And, um, I enjoyed fatherhood. I had a ball. I enjoyed fatherhood more than any of my friends who were also fathers through that same age and stage. And it was just the most wondrous thing. It never and it never wore off. It never wore off.

Maggie Dent: [00:18:30] Love is a powerful force, isn't it, Graham? When it hits you in the heart.

Graham Long: [00:18:34] Life changing. Life changing. You're never the same person. And it's for the better.

Maggie Dent: [00:18:40] What was the most challenging thing about raising your kids and being a dad? What did you find difficult?

Graham Long: [00:18:48] Well, you know, I loved it. I loved this whole process. I loved everything about it. You know, I remember one day James was with us, and Mandy wasn't yet. And, um, I used to study day and night. I even I'd make love to, Robin still, you know, parsing my Greek verbs in my head. Um, and, you know, it just was like that. And one morning, James came in and he said, you know, what are we going to do, dad? And I said, oh, sweetheart, it's, you know, we can't go to the park straight off. I've got to mow the lawn and do a few jobs like that. And he just disappeared. And he came back in a couple of minutes. He said, I've filled the mower for you, dad. I said, how exactly did you do that? He said, oh, with the hose.

Maggie Dent: [00:19:38] Ha ha. Oh, you got to love that.

Graham Long: [00:19:45] Well, you know, there are so many of those sort of stories that even at the time, you know, even at the time you think, well, I'm up for a new mower or something. It was a lovely, you know, it's a great moment. You know, [00:20:00] he was just keen to help me do whatever it was, do so that we can go and have fun. So I think your question is, what are the challenges?

Maggie Dent: [00:20:07] Yep.

Graham Long: [00:20:09] I was a little bit inclined to in spite of what I saw in my father, I was a bit inclined to work around the clock as if I was saving the world. I think equally as delusional as dad in my years through their primary school and high school, especially in those years, I think I was quite caught up in my own importance and the importance of what I was doing, and I look back on that with a good deal of regret. I think I was quite stupid at the time. Delusional, really..

Maggie Dent: [00:20:54] So we all muck up as parents because we are human and other than not being there as much as I would have liked to. Can you think of a dad fail that you might like to share with us?

Graham Long: [00:21:07] Uh, yes. Uh, there's no shortage of dad fail. My biggest fail was I had an extra marital affair, and my kids were teenagers at the time. And I think the damage I did to them. I think the damage I did to lots of people, even people who don't even know they were damaged in the process. It remains to the extent that I even, you know, if I'm awake at night and I'm not sleeping and I'm haunted by old memories, this is one of them. And I think James and Mandy each reacted differently. And they're very different people, those two young people. James has died, but at the time, he was newly married.

Maggie Dent: [00:21:56] So do you think you just desperately disappointed [00:22:00] them that you weren't the dad they thought they had? Is that what the wound is?

Graham Long: [00:22:05] Very much so, I think. Yeah. And a betrayal of their mother. Who they loved. James didn't really react when I told him. I don't think he knew how to react. Then he phoned me the next day and he said, dad, I've written you a letter. This is a boy who never writes anything, ever. He's written me a letter. Okay. He said, I want to read it to you. So he came round the next day and asked me to sit down, and he paced up and down the lounge room, reading his letter. And it was a lengthy letter. It might have been 15 pages, and it kept coming back to, dad, I want you to know that I'm with mum, and if mum forgives you and you live through this. Okay, I'm with mum. And if mum doesn't forgive you through this, then I'm with mum.

Maggie Dent: [00:22:58] Wow.

Graham Long: [00:22:59] So he'd really made an effort to make his stand. And this thing was a very public event because I was a minister at the time. And, you know, in church circles, this is big news. Anyway, I overheard him. He didn't know that I was listening, but I overheard him on a phone call to a mate because this was red hot news. And I heard him say to a mate, yeah, look, I am disappointed in dad. I rate him now at 99.9%, but I think you'll recover..

Graham Long: [00:23:37] So that's the line he was giving his mates. He was a dear boy.

Maggie Dent: [00:23:42] Yeah, so as a pastor, we know that you were always looking after others, but can you share how painful it was when your own son, James died unexpectedly when he was only 30 with three young kids. How did you cope?

Graham Long: [00:23:59] Well, [00:24:00] it's a daily thing, really. I hear people talk about closure and I can't see it. I don't think there is such a thing. Really.

Maggie Dent: [00:24:12] Not the loss of a child.

Graham Long: [00:24:13] No. I think in many ways he's still here. I couldn't explain me without him, really. He's part of me. And one of his children is wearing his face, so she walks in the room. She could ask me for credit cards I'd hand him straight over. And so it's hard to put words on it.

Maggie Dent: [00:24:42] Did it change the way you were a pastor to others in terms of the loss of a child, or were you already good at that? It's easy to care for others and ourselves when our hearts' broken.

Graham Long: [00:24:55] I'd like to tell you I'm good at all sorts of things. But the truth is... This nose, by the way, I haven't got a cold, this is just a feature. This is life. Um, I have a lung condition called bronchiectasis, so I often cough as well, but that comes out before I know I've coughed. So, uh, lots of things changed. In fact, most everything about my outlook on life changed. I learned to discern the difference between big and little. I realised that a lot of my life, I had given my energy to things that were really of no consequence, and I'd made the little very big. And after his death, I no longer cared where I lived, what I drove, what I wore, and most especially, I didn't care what you thought about how well I was doing, whatever it was I was doing, and if I was honest up until that time, I would have to say that I did a [00:26:00] lot to try and prove to the world that I was good at what I did, and that I was at least above average. Well, that changed with his death.

Graham Long: [00:26:11] When, not long after he died, Sarah, his wife, said to me, is there anything of his you'd like? And, um, I said, no, I no, I would like him back. She said, well, take something, why don't you take his watch? So I accepted that. And every day since, I've worn two watches and his watch, within a couple of months of me wearing it ran out of battery and it stopped at one minute to midnight, and I've left it there. And so I have one watch that tells me the time and I have another watch that's always accurate. It's a watch that says it's one minute to midnight because I, you know, I really learned that you only live for five minutes, really. And I've only got a minute left and it helps me when I'm about to do something, you know, I think, is this how I would like to spend my last minute? And that's helped me avoid a lot of kind of church talk-festing kind of stuff, you know, you get a you get a something from the church, an email saying, we've developed this report and I think, wow, a report, that'll do it.

Graham Long: [00:27:32] And so it's really helped me understand how to let some things go and to keep what's important as important. So I think it changed everything really.

Maggie Dent: [00:27:46] Graham, what did you learn about love after you lost your son James?

Graham Long: [00:27:51] Again, lots of things. At the time that he died, I was fundraising to replace the buildings at wayside. I [00:28:00] hate fundraisers and I hate building programs with a passion, but I really had no choice because the buildings were falling over. So I found myself as a fundraiser and, um, hated it. One of the best things about retirement is I don't ask anyone for money. It's just a joy. Anyway, Wayside gave me access to board meetings and rich philanthropists and and I was due to go to a board meeting one day and I suddenly realised I was a bit late. Now, something I did inherit from my father is I'd rather not go than be late by one minute. I hate to be late for anything, ever.

Graham Long: [00:28:44] So I dashed out of that room and thought, I need a cab now. Right now I need a cab. And I down the stairs and to the front door. And there was a scruffy homeless fellow standing in the door, looking like he wanted to block my way. And I hadn't met this fellow before, but he was memorable because as homeless people go, he was particularly scruffy. I would put him at about, at the time, maybe 30, so

roughly my son's age I guess. So I made it clear I want to get past him and he moved to block me.

Graham Long: [00:29:20] So I went the other way thinking this is a bit of a annoyance, and he moved to block me the other way. So then I rifled through my pockets looking for a couple of dollars because that solves almost everything at wayside is just a few dollars. And he he didn't want dollars either, so he ended up standing in front of me with a goofy look on his face. And he put his arms around me and he kissed me on the side of the face. And he said, that's from your son.

Maggie Dent: [00:29:54] What?

Graham Long: [00:29:55] And he changed. He changed my life. That fella.

Maggie Dent: [00:29:59] Wow.

Graham Long: [00:29:59] Um, [00:30:00] what I realised then was love was everywhere to be found and everywhere in need of me. And up until then, I'd been running off autopilot from James's death. I mean, people at Wayside were lovely to me. I couldn't tell you how many times I was offered a holiday house in some exotic place. You know, I've got a holiday house in Saint-Tropez Graham, just take it. But I couldn't do that. I actually needed Wayside's routine. And I needed the demands of this building project to keep me stable and on the ground, I guess. But I was running on autopilot. My heart wasn't in it until this scruffy, old homeless fella confronted me and showed me that love's everywhere in need of me.

Maggie Dent: [00:30:57] What are your biggest fears now as you're watching your grandkids grow up? About growing up in today's world, Graham, what worries you?

Graham Long: [00:31:08] I had a grandfather on my mother's side who conducted quite an exacting business all his life, and I think he only ever signed one contract in his life. All his business was done by handshakes. Well, can you imagine trying to conduct a business in our day on a handshake? The world has changed with the depreciation of the word. We find it harder and harder to discern what's a fraud. The distinction between

spin, lies and words. This becomes very, very difficult to to discern. And I worry about that. I don't really want to sound too much like Dad, but I can't help it at this stage.

Maggie Dent: [00:31:57] Go on, go for it.

Graham Long: [00:31:59] To me, religious [00:32:00] questions have not evaporated. They're still there. You ask a question like, what's a human being worth? That's a religious question. There's science has nothing to say about that question. But the world has become convinced that all of this belongs to the realm of fairy tales.

Maggie Dent: [00:32:19] Your concern is one that mirrors one. Mine is that are we raising our children to have character, to have integrity, to have values that actually aren't just about themselves and wanting to be famous on TikTok or something? Are we investing in that? And it doesn't matter. You know, we know there are humans who can raise children with good character, who don't belong to a religion, but it's about values and consistency of what is modeled. And that that has to be a concern when we now have AI and fake images and everything. That's so far from the truth. How did they find where the truth is? And in order to make choices as they move forward in life, is that kind of what you might be concerned about with me?

Graham Long: [00:33:03] If you lose the idea of truth itself, you are lost. You are lost and how are young people to learn their word is everything. You know, Aristotle talked for a while about how the young people are all going to the dogs and nobody respects their parents and all that.

Maggie Dent: [00:33:23] So we've all been saying that forever.

Graham Long: [00:33:24] But there is something different about our situation. The weapons we use are different. There was a time when people made weapons in order to go to war, and now it seems like we go to war in order to sell weapons. And the spin is unrelenting. And the way politicians especially, but not just politicians, will look straight down a camera and tell you a bald faced lie that they don't believe.

Maggie Dent: [00:33:52] Yep,

Graham Long: [00:33:53] They don't believe. There are times of times I get so caught up in American politics that I get to the point where I can't. [00:34:00] I have to stop. I have to go and walk along a beach or shut that off somehow, because the the bald faced lying, it's like nobody's trying to pretend anymore that my words mean anything other than a manipulating you to get you to the spot where I want you.

Maggie Dent: [00:34:24] Can I ask you for a moment where you can brag about something you're really proud of as being a dad? What's one of your big dad wins for? For something you either have done a lot of times, or maybe just once.

Graham Long: [00:34:38] I hope. I hope there's lots of fun that the kids recall. I was with my one of my grandchildren once and her mum didn't like McDonald's, really, she didn't think that was food. And so it was only an extra special treat that your grandfather could occasionally take her to McDonald's. So I was out with this dear little girl, and I said to her, look, it's about lunch time, darling, do you think we should go to McDonald's? She said, oh, Papa, mum said we can't have lunch at McDonald's. I said, oh, okay. Did mum say we couldn't have a snack? And she, she got it. She said no, I think we can't have lunch, but we could probably have a snack. So we walked into McDonald's and we went to the counter and I said to her, honey, what would you like? And she said, everything. I said, we can do that.

Maggie Dent: [00:35:37] I love it.

Graham Long: [00:35:38] I said to the lady behind the counter, I want one of everything you sell. So we had bags and bags of junk which we took home, and the look on the mother's face was unbelievable. You know, we hardly ate any of it. That didn't matter. We had to relay this stuff into the house. But I created a memory that little girl will never forget.

Maggie Dent: [00:35:58] Never forget. And that's a [00:36:00] biggie for dads, is we got to make sure we're making memories that matter. Not the time we yelled at them or we got frustrated with them. But the memories that matter and they've got to either have a big amount of joy and be so different, or we've got to be in a really good emotional state, like laughing till we nearly wet ourselves. And I was blessed with a dad that that humour is so many of my memories are linked to something really funny he would have done.

Maggie Dent: [00:36:31] Okay, Graham, you retired from Wayside and you still help out at the local church in Braidwood. Does those moments of helping others still give you that same sense of fulfillment, even though now, you know, an elderly man on the cusp of possibly what we could call retirement, or just slowing down.

Maggie Dent: [00:36:50] Or death.

Maggie Dent: [00:36:51] Or or it could be the exit. Yeah. No. You're right.

Graham Long: [00:36:54] Yeah, yeah. I can see the end of the runway from here. I've discovered around Braidwood isolation like people in the city don't dream about. There are people who live without electricity, without gas, without a toilet. I've just finished building a toilet for an elderly lady who's been using a bucket all these years. And she just has a bucket. And when it gets a bit full, she takes it out the back and throws it into some sawdust. And so we built her a toilet and that cost us ten grand, which a donor thankfully gave me. Um, we're repairing cars all the time. We're helping people repair their cars because you live ten KS, 12 KS, 20 KS out of town, there is no public transport whatsoever. You are completely isolated. I called on a lady who lives out of Araluen. It's one of these gold rush towns and there's only [00:38:00] a pub there. There's nothing else. And the pub hasn't seen a lick of paint since the gold rush anyway, so it's a just a funny old place, like stepping back in time really. The roads down into Araluen are dangerous to put it mildly. This lady lived in such isolation. I couldn't get through with my car to visit her.

Graham Long: [00:38:23] I had to go to a mate who had a Toyota troop carrier thing, and we had to scale through creek beds and God knows till eventually we found this lady living in a wooden hut. No toilet, no power, nothing. Anyway, I said to her, what possessed you to live out here? And she said, I like peace and quiet. I said, honey be no point praying here, god will never find you. It's isolation, like people you know. There's no shops in Araluen, so the closest shops are in Braidwood. So a good 30 minutes drive away. So how does a lady who hasn't got a car feed herself? How does that happen? I was with a young fella just a little while ago who had an accident. And I think he might have been a tad under the weather, had an accident, and was by the side of the road, he'd broken both legs and it took seven hours for someone else to go

past in order for him to raise an alarm. No phone service, of course. So it's out the way of everything. So, uh. Yeah, I'm. I'm discovering all sorts of new ways to try and be of some use to people.

Maggie Dent: [00:39:40] Spreading your love and service right the way through to the end of the runway I can think that's what you're going to do.

Maggie Dent: [00:39:40] What is the one thing if you can only choose one Graham, that you want your Mandy [00:40:00] or your grandchildren to have learnt from you as a dad or a papa, what would it be?

Graham Long: [00:40:07] I'd like them to think that I gave this my best shot. Not that I was a great example of anything in particular, because I don't think I am actually, I don't claim to know much. In fact, I claim to know very little the older I get, the less I know. Um. And I'm more and more bereft of answers to all of life's questions really. But I'd like them to think I gave this my best shot and did what I could to make it a bit better for some.

Maggie Dent: [00:40:42] And your final question if you could wind the clock back, which is obviously a very long time at the moment, what advice would you give to yourself before you went to pick up this beautiful baby, James, to become a dad? What advice would you give young Graham?

Graham Long: [00:40:59] I went to my dad once, after I was the father of this baby James, and I was a bit scared that you can love a baby too much. And I said to dad, can you love a little boy too much? And dad, who only had 20 minute answers like there was no such thing as a brief answer. Dad said to me, no.

Maggie Dent: [00:41:22] Beautiful.

Graham Long: [00:41:23] So I would say probably if this was a real question and I could, we could really do this impossible thing. I think I'd say to me, love this love that is clearly here and enjoy it and, you know, have the most fun in the world. But in due course, as your career takes off, be suspicious of yourself. Be suspicious that you will

con yourself into thinking you're more significant than you really are, because the really precious things will evaporate into the background.

Maggie Dent: [00:41:58] And you can never love [00:42:00] a child too much.

Graham Long: [00:42:02] No, no.

Maggie Dent: [00:42:04] Graham, thank you for your time and your wisdom and, uh, good luck on the long run up the runway.

Graham Long: [00:42:15] It'll happen quick enough.

Maggie Dent: [00:42:18] Graham Long, former pastor of the Wayside Chapel. What an incredible way to look at the world. Graham is an inspiring man, and he had some practical tips that I think belong on our Good Enough Dad checklist. Firstly. Be really careful and suspicious of your need to work super hard outside the home, even if it is in service, because you too could create that deep regret that you just weren't there enough for your kids. Secondly, the death of a child changes you and know you probably never fully recover. However, you can learn the difference between the big things in life and the little things in life. And the third one; you can never love a baby or a child too much. Never never, never. I'm Maggie Dent, and this is The Good Enough Dad. Follow us on the LiSTNR app or wherever you get your podcasts.