



Helping you guide
your child's heart
to the heart of God



024: Working out conflict and keeping the peace with teens and adult kids

CAREY:

Hey, welcome back friends. This is Carey

MINDI:

And this is Mindi. So today we had it on our hearts that we wanted to talk about conflict that can come up as your kids get older, when they become teens in college, they move out of the house, they're adults and it's a unique kind of conflict and a lot of times we as parents could be a little bit afraid of it. And so we wanted to encourage you in this area.

CAREY:

Yeah, I definitely think the fear part is a big deal. We become afraid of some very legitimate things that we might push them away or that the relationship would be ruined and we lose contact with our kids or grandkids or whatever's involved. And so it's a heart rendering thing.

MINDI:

Yeah. So we want to encourage you with some of the things that we have learned and the things that we are still implementing. Because our kids are 31 on down and

CAREY:

All adults.

MINDI:

All adults and all out of the house. So we've had a lot of practice at this. Yeah. But just recently.

CAREY:

Yeah. And there's a lot of opportunity still for disagreements, tensions, conflicts that you might run into even in a good family. And so as adults, how do you handle that with teens? How do you handle that? The first thing that we wanted to just kind of put on your radar to remind you about is that though it's easy to become hopeless or to feel very hopeless, we as believers in Christ have to remember that God is faithful. He's the one who's busy doing all this work through us as parents, in our kids as followers of Christ. Even if they haven't trusted in Christ yet, he's doing work in their lives. And Psalm one 19 versus 89 and 91 express that for us

MINDI:

It says forever. Oh Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Your faithfulness endures to all generations. You've established the earth and it stands fast by your appointment. They stand this day for all things are your servants.

CAREY:

And I love the context with which David talks about God's faithfulness here. First off, it's very encouraging to me. He says, God's faithfulness endures to all generations. I hear generations and I think family, I think parents, kids, grandkids, God's faithfulness is there. It's there for us, for our kids, for our grandkids, for everyone. But I love that he puts this in in the context of the kinds of things that God manages. It says you have firmly fixed the heavens, you've established the earth and it stands fast by your appointment. All of it stands to this day for all things are your servants. So folks, we have every reason to have hope in the faithfulness of God because all things are his servant.

MINDI:

And to remember that he is a kind loving God and a kind heavenly Father to you and to your children, we can find great comfort in that.

CAREY:

Yeah, absolutely. The next principle that we want to put on your radar is that it could be a long haul. This kind of thing, working out tension, especially when your kids are adults and have families of their own. It can really be a long haul to get through those things to keep persevering, to see some sort of unity come about eventually. So one of the verses that's encouraging to us in this way is first Peter five, six through seven,

MINDI:

Humble yourselves, therefore under the mighty hand of God. So that at the proper time he may lift you casting all your anxieties on him because he cares for you. So being able to endure the process that it takes sometimes to work through tensions and conflicts with your older kids, we really need humility to be able to wait on the Lord and to be patient with God <laugh> in the time he's taking and patient with ourselves and with our kids.

CAREY:

Yeah, I think so because this really dovetails in with that previous point about God being faithful. Though God is faithful though he is able to use all things as his servants, he doesn't always do it on the spot. He doesn't always do it immediately or in the timeframe we feel like should happen. Relational conflicts usually are a process to work out and it takes step by painful steps sometimes to get to a good end. And so we want to encourage you though it can be a long haul. Keep yourself in humble place. Keep yourself trusting patient looking to God for your resources that you need and he will sustain you. Now besides these two basic encouragements that we've given you, there are some principles that we've discovered in dealing with tensions with our kids. And I guess these apply to people in general. But we wanted to walk through these, just explain what each of them means to us and hopefully the Holy Spirit will help you to apply it to your situation.

MINDI:

First of all, you always want to be having a dependence on the Lord. And that comes through your prayer, that comes through your time with the Lord. Let's say you're noticing a defensive, rebellious

attitude in your teenager, your teenage daughter who's in ninth grade let's say. And you're really concerned about it and you're noticing that she's not open to you. You've got to start with the Lord, you've got to lay it all out. You've got to seek the Lord for wisdom and discernment yourself. And you've got to ask the Lord for what you're wanting him to do in your daughter and then ask him how to go about it. How should I talk to my daughter about this? Is there any counsel I should seek outside of myself and my husband? I mean you talk with your husband about it, pray about it, make it a project. So the first thing is prayerful dependence on the Lord to gain wisdom about how to handle the conflict that's going on.

MINDI:

Another principle that would be I think secondary after you're dependent on the Lord and seeking his guidance would be to pursue the child through planned conversations. So after you seek God's wisdom of how should I go about this, then you, you need to pursue the child and say, I would love to talk with you tonight and see how you're doing. And then hopefully depend on where they're at. You can start the conversation letting them know how much you love them. You've notice they've been acting a certain way or they've been upset about something. Is there anything I've done to hurt you? Or is there something that you've been upset about at school? Just get the dialogue going. Get the conversation started.

CAREY:

Yeah. And why would you say pursuit is so important? What is it communicating to the child?

MINDI:

It communicates that you love them, that they're important to you, it matters to you what they're thinking and feeling.

CAREY:

I agree. I think when someone takes initiative in your life, it always feels good on some level. Even if the kid is in this stubborn rebellious mode and saying, leave me alone, you're always getting into my business. Whatever they're saying, the fact that you're taking initiative toward them is really going to touch them on a level you may not be able to see. So I think that's very important.

MINDI:

There's a lot of ways that you can pursue your child. You can do it just outright and say, dad and I would love to sit down and talk with you tonight just to see how you're doing or if that does not go well with your child cause you haven't done that in the past very much. Maybe you could just here and there, go to their room when they've come home from school and start talking to them and just how are they doing? What's been going on? But another thing that we didn't mention about when you're praying about the situation is that it's important to ask the Lord to show you where you have hurt your child, where you have caused them to be upset with you and you don't even know it. So that when you have those planned conversations you can say, God's been showing me that when I do these things or say these things, that it upsets you and it makes you feel controlled or hurt or you know, whatever. And so you bring it up even before they can bring it up.

CAREY:

And I think the reason, or one of the reasons that is so important is because sometimes as parents, when a kid is being stubborn, rebellious, having an attitude, whatever, we can just cast that a whole thing in a negative light and think they're just being bad or, or whatever label we put on it, we don't realize they may have truly been offended. They may truly have a reason for being hurt by you or by your spouse or something. And in their immaturity they're not expressing it well. They're not coming to you as the Bible instructs to have it dealt with in a right way. So you need to be the one to be willing to stay humble as we already talked about, and move toward the child with those kinds of issues as the Lord reveals them

MINDI:

In a non-defensive way. Yeah.

CAREY:

Confessing the wrongs that the Lord shows to you asking for forgiveness. And as parents, this may feel a little weird that you're asking your kid for forgiveness, but hey, we're sinners too, right? We're the ones who, who make mistakes toward our children at times. So we need to make that right with them and that will go a long way in building trust with a kid that's been hurt.

MINDI:

Yeah. And let's say it's not an issue where you have done wrong as a parent, but it's the immaturity of your child or the maturity of your adult child and they have the wrong perspective, the wrong attitude towards you because of their immaturity. We still need to be humble and non-defensive as we approach them. And we still need to ask them, are there ways that I've hurt you? Is that why you haven't wanted to talk to me all week in doing that? And presenting yourself as approachable and open to your child could go very far for them. If they respond in an angry defensive mode and I don't want to talk about it and be done, you did open the door just a little bit because you were able to speak those words to them. You were able to say, I love you son and I care for you and I feel like I've really hurt you and it's okay if you don't feel comfortable telling me right now, but I want you to know I want to know and I want to make it better. So I'll be praying that we can talk about it someday soon.

CAREY:

Yeah. And because all things are servants of the Lord, he will use that in their mind and in their heart to cause them to think over the days, weeks to come. Mom was almost confessing something there. Mom was about to make things right. It might come back to you, they may return and say, well you wanted to say something the other day or you were going to say that you did this. What? What was that about? You know? And you may be able to have a conversation later that you initiated just by being humble.

MINDI:

A big part of pursuing your child through conversations is you're able to bring up things that your children might not necessarily be thinking. They're not realizing what's going on. But we know that so many times teenagers talk to their peers at school, my mom this or my dad that. I hate it. That they, when they do those things and it grieves your heart as a parent for them to be saying those things you don't want them to. And you would love to be able to work that out if you knew. So just bringing those kind of conversations up just out of the blue even, and just, just saying, you know, son or daughter, if you ever feel this way and you find yourself talking to your peers and complaining about your parents, I understand I did that too, but I would love to not hurt you and bother you in those ways. So can you talk

to me about it too? So can we can work it through because I want your teenage years here, the last few years that you're at in the home. I want them to be such a, a joy and a blessing for you. We just want you to feel our love. So saying things like that to your child about truth of how you feel will go a long way because they'll be thinking about it and mulling it over and it will soften their hearts towards you.

CAREY:

Yeah. And if you make that offer to your child, you better be ready to be humble when they do finally come to you, don't get all defensive and well what are you saying? I don't do that. If you're going to open a door for them to have the opportunity to come to you, be humble. You don't have to be defensive, you don't have to get angry. You can respond with true sadness that you've hurt them and that you can work through this problem together. I mean, be thankful about that. That's a good thing.

MINDI:

And the reason why we've been focusing on the side of the parent of how they need to respond humbly is because a lot of times at this teenage young adult stage, your children are immature and they're thinking in, in many ways they, they're at the stage where they're thinking they know a lot, they're looking towards the future, especially if they're out of the house, they've graduated from college, they're into their job many times. There's that attitude of pride that I know <laugh>, I know what's best. And we know as parents we went through that stage and we know that that's not true and we've learned a lot since then. But we need to go slow and steady with our kids and if there's a conflict because of complaint they have, we want to work that through not, okay, I'm sorry I did that. But let me tell you this immature attitude I've been seeing in you and there's a lot of pride in you and you know, whatever, whatever. We need to slowly build towards that and trust the Lord to, to reach their heart in that and they will reach it more quickly if they see our humility towards them.

CAREY:

What you're saying is that patience is indeed a virtue in this whole process because the Lord himself is excruciatingly patient. If you think about all the sin in the world and all the years that have gone on and the way history continues to churn and people continue to sin, God himself is being sinned against bazillions of times every day. And he's so patient with the process, he's working for good in the lives of those people. And we just need to have a little taste of that in our attitude toward our kids. We need to be patient with the process they are going through.

MINDI:

And in doing that we, we always want to communicate the heart of God to them. And that will mean at times you will speak the truth of their wrong. Let's say your child is getting into drinking or drugs or some other bad sinful behaviors, there's ways you can approach it to a child who's not necessarily open to change, but you can say, I I love you. I've noticed that you've been getting involved in these things and I'm going to be praying for you because God doesn't want you to be controlled by that. He doesn't want you to go down that path. I don't want you to go down that path, but I want you to know that we will always be here to love you and to help you work through anything. So in that scenario you said the wrong was wrong, but you're not condemning them and saying, I don't want to have anything to do with you because you're practicing these bad things. So it's trusting the process of God working in their heart little by little as you are showing them love through the whole time. And of course that's why we go back to our very beginning of first principle. You need dependence on the Lord because he's going to give you the detailed discernment and wisdom of when to say those things and how to say them and

CAREY:

Whether you should say them at all.

MINDI:

Yeah, I mean it's just all the way around. But these are just general principles that we're wanting to share with you today.

CAREY:

And I think last in all of these things, be ready at all times to express constant love to your kids and an eagerness to know them and an eagerness to understand them. We all want to be understood, especially by the people who are closest to us. And so express those things in simple ways, in thoughtful ways and considerate ways, and even in those hard conversations express, I know this is hard, we're kind of headbutting right now, but I really do want to understand, I really do want to be for you and with you in this and let those words over time penetrate the heart and the soul of your kids.

MINDI:

That is such a good word. We, we've experienced that with some of our kids and there's a situation I'm thinking of where it actually took a few years of that type of a interaction with our child to where the Lord was doing a great work in their life and in our life too, because we were having to trust him a lot, stay humble, but God was really growing our child and it was painful to watch sometimes, but we stayed open, we stayed honest with them, but the Lord was faithful. And now the child know has known all along that we wanted to understand them and has known all along that we've loved them, but they've grown and they're at that place where they're understanding more of God's will for them. And so it was hard, but we persevered, we trusted the Lord and it wasn't an easy, quick fix.

CAREY:

That's right, that's right. Now in all these things, obviously we're not giving you a lot of step by steps because every situation's going to be different. We'd be happy to talk with you about your situation. If you have specifics and you would like to ask for some counsel and advice, you can go to God-fearing kids.com and scroll to the bottom of the page. There's a form there where you can contact us and tell us the details of your situation and we'll respond with some thoughts from the scripture and from the experiences the Lord has given us. Well, Mindi, would you pray for our friends today?

MINDI:

Yes, dear Lord, thank you so much for your wisdom, your guidance and discernment to us as parents. And I ask for those who are listening, that you will encourage them with yourself and with a peace in them, knowing that you are there to give them wisdom whenever they ask. I pray the Lord that you'll direct them specifically to their situations and bring them to verses that they could go to that will be encouraging to them and also encouraging for them to share with their kids when that's best. I pray Father, that you'll also give them other outside encouragement, either through sermons or friend or other Godly counsel. I just pray, Lord, that you will bring hope to the parents listening and give them joy and victory in their parenting. Lord Jesus name. Amen.

CAREY:

Amen