



## 028: Listener Question: When a non-Christian parent is in the mix

### INTRO AUDIO::

Take a moment to think about what it would be like if you were sitting in a rowboat facing another person, you were rowing one way and they were rowing in the opposite direction. Well that's what it can be like when a believing parent is trying to parent alongside an unbelieving parent. We answer a listener question about that type of scenario on this episode of God bringing kids and the parents who raise them.

### MINDI:

Welcome friends. We're glad to be with you again today,

### CAREY:

Carey and Mindi here. You know, parenting for the glory of Jesus can be a difficult thing even in the ideal scenario that you might be in. And it's even more difficult when only one of two parents in a family are believers in Christ. We had a listener recently send us a question about this issue, thought you'd like to hear what they had to ask us.

### Speaker 3:

Hi Carey. Hey Mindi, I really enjoy your show. I do have a question though. What would be your biggest advice for a two-parent household with only one believer? Look forward to hearing uh, your guys' thoughts. Thank you. God bless.

### CAREY:

Well first of all, thank you dear friend for sending in that question. If anyone else listening has a question you would like to send our way, you can go to [God for your kids.com](http://Godforyourkids.com) and there is a button there you can push to record your own voice and we'd love to have your question. So Mindi, as you hear what our sister shares, obviously you can tell from her voice there's just concern for her, her kids, her spouse, her family. How would you respond? First of all,

### MINDI:

I would want to encourage her that first of all, her strength comes from depending on Jesus and not her spouse.

### CAREY:

Hmm. And what do you mean by that?

MINDI:

Because she and her spouse are not like-minded in raising their children to love the Lord because her spouse doesn't know Jesus. Yet her strength and dependence on Jesus is what is going to be her source for knowing how to parent her children. Well,

CAREY:

Okay. I absolutely agree with you there. Let's talk about some of the rubber means the road kind of things that a person in this position needs to do in order to make Jesus their strength.

MINDI:

Well, I can see it being a very hard situation I feel for any parent who is in this situation because they care very much for their children and are wanting to raise them in the right way. So there's just that natural tension that's going to be there all the time. But I would say first and foremost, their relationship with the Lord needs to be steady and strong. So if you parent, husband or wife are not having regular times with the Lord, reading the Bible and praying and seeking Jesus for wisdom just in life along with your parenting, that needs to come first.

CAREY:

Yeah. It's hard to drive a car with no gas in it, so to speak. Mm-hmm <affirmative>. And if you imagine your life, your parenting, everything that you're doing as a believer in Christ as the car and your time with the Lord is your fuel. You really need to be doing that regularly. That includes asking for wisdom, something that we've talked about on the podcast a lot. We have this great promise in the book of James that if any of us lacks wisdom, we should ask of God and he will give generously. So I would agree with you there. We need to make sure that's part of the equation as well.

MINDI:

So the first thing we want to encourage you with spouse is regular time with the Lord growing in your relationship with him, asking for wisdom, regular prayer for your spouse and your children. And then trusting Jesus to be faithful and active in how he leads you to love your family. Well, because you need to remember that Jesus is caring for you, the salvation of your spouse and caring for the growth of your children more than you are. Hmm. So you're involved in, in a pretty big project with the Lord, but you can be completely dependent on him and confident that he is going to lead you. You're actually in a beautiful position to be a great blessing to your spouse and your children and to give God the glory if you humbly seek him daily.

CAREY:

Yeah. Another mental image came to mind as you were saying it that way and that is, you know, imagine yourself as a decorator in a home and God is the interior designer who's over the whole project and he's telling you the color scheme, he's telling you the palette, he's telling you what goes where and why. That's the kind of relationship we're talking about here that will provide strength. Now one other thing that we thought of that goes along with this is to make sure you're finding like-minded friends who can come alongside you for the sake of support and prayer and encouragement. And when I say like-minded, I mean other Christian parents, maybe it's a parent's group, it's your church or maybe it's a mom's group or something like that. If you have opportunity to find something like that, don't let yourself be isolated because the predator Satan picks us off much more easily when we're on our own.

MINDI:

Yes, I agree. That is huge. This is a big job for a spouse to be raising their children alone in this way. And so you really needed the support. Another very important mindset that you as a spouse need to have is that you need to be mindful of loving your spouse well in front of your kids. Because as your children are growing in the knowledge of the Lord, they're going to be noticing that their mom or dad doesn't know Jesus like they are coming to know him. And so your example of loving your spouse well is huge and in some ways even more important than what you actually teach your children about Jesus at that time.

CAREY:

Yeah, I think that's a great point. Second Peter chapter three verses one and two make a point about this specifically for wives and our listener who asked the question was a woman. So this should apply there, but this also is just a principle in general for anyone who's dealing with an unbelieving spouse. We have to have this sense of integrity in our own character and in the life that we live. Second Peter three, one and two says, likewise wives be subject to your own husband's. So that, and here's the principle, even if some do not obey the word, they may be one without a word by the conduct of their wives when they see you respectful in pure conduct. So part of what that unbelieving spouse is going to be watching is your life. And if your life does not demonstrate that the faith you want to teach your children is something worth having, they're going to be even more resistant or more skeptical. So make sure that you're living in the power that the Lord provides

MINDI:

And your children seeing your sacrificial love day-to-day towards their other parent is going to be huge because they're going to be seeing Christ lived out. So keep that in mind to not become resentful towards your spouse because they are not in agreement with you about certain ways you want to raise the children, but ask the Lord to give you a merciful and compassionate heart towards your spouse. You as the spouse, it's your main project to be praying for your unbelieving husband or wife so that they will come to the Lord one day soon hopefully.

CAREY:

Yeah. And that makes me mindful of the next little subpoint we have here. And that is you need to, in your, in your heart of hearts, in your attitude, be trusting God with this situation. Not trusting your spouse. And what I mean is not trusting that eventually my spouse is going to change or eventually my spouse is going to agree or, or maybe they'll do this or that. You know, you need to let go of the expectations about the spouse and instead trust the Lord. Verse six, in the same chapter of second Peter continues this instruction to wives and it's talking about women being daughters of Sarah who was Abraham's wife. And it says, you are Sarah's children if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening. And so notice that. Why could Peter suggest that a wife who's trying to follow an unbelieving husband might be fearful?

CAREY:

Well she might be fearful because she doesn't know if he's going to lead in bad directions. She doesn't know if him rejecting the Lord is going to bring negative consequences. I mean there's all kinds of reasons she might be fearful. Well I can imagine that's the same for a, a wife who's trying to parent in a Christian manner when the husband's not, or a husband who's trying to parent in a Christian manner when the wife is not. This principle holds true. We need to trust the Lord, not the spouse to get their act together. We need to be relying on the Lord from square one all the way through.

MINDI:

Another encouragement we want to give to you is to be confident but careful in how you train your kids in the way of the Lord. So be confident in the Lord's leading to teach your children about the Lord and to tell them the gospel and even bring them to the saving knowledge of Christ. Teach them how to be a servant and to love like Jesus and teach them Bible verses all different kinds of things that God might bring to your mind. Be confident in doing that but also be very sensitive to how it's affecting your spouse. This is a sticky situation obviously, and it's, it's not easy, but the Lord will guide you in how to work those things out. I would encourage you to be respectful of your spouse and ask your spouse, is it okay if I put Bible verses on the refrigerator? Is that going to upset you or is it okay if I go over our Bible verses that I'm learning with the kids at bedtime?

CAREY:

And I can imagine that if the spouse said no, I don't want you teaching my kids that junk. I'm just trying to imagine. And the, the worst scenario here, you may have to kind of go underground because I'm mindful of what the apostle said to the authorities when they were preaching the gospel and the authorities brought them in and said, don't speak anymore in this name. And they said, we must obey God rather than man. I mean there is a point where a believing parent is going to have to obey God and not their spouse. And so it may need to be a little covert, maybe bedtime prayers when the spouse is not around. It may be discussions with the kids when the spouse is gone to work or at the store or something like that. You, you just need to do so very carefully and as Mindi said before, with the leadership and guidance of the Holy Spirit,

MINDI:

Yes. And as much as possible work to have peace in your home, not causing bitterness to come up needlessly. And also as your children get older, it would be helpful to be honest with them too, a point in a respectful way. For example, saying, I know you see that daddy is not doing the same things we're doing. He doesn't go to church with us, but we're praying for him because we love him and Jesus loves him and Jesus wants him to know him. So you're always on the positive. You're, you're helping your children to understand how to think about their mom or dad who does not know the Lord in a loving way, not in a critical condemning way. I think that can also help the children to maybe not want to take the side of their parent who doesn't know the Lord instead of, no, I want to be more like dad or no I want to be more like mom. But they're gaining wisdom because you're teaching them God's perspective of how to think of their parent who does not know Jesus.

CAREY:

Yeah, I think that's great advice. Let's just take one more step and walk down that road of a worst case scenario. Just because someone listening is likely experiencing this, what should this parent do when this spouse's parenting approach is not just opposed to Christianity but just outright harmful? I mean, say they want to allow the 10 year old to watch movies with them that are graphic and nasty and or horror movies or what, how, how should a Christian parent respond in a situation like that?

MINDI:

They need to be honest with their spouse and appeal to them. Ask if they cannot do that and tell them the reasons why lovingly and kindly and humbly hoping that the spouse will agree to it. But then if they don't agree or if the situation just becomes difficult, the believing spouse needs to continue to be dependent on the Lord and very prayerful because we need to remember that God is over all of this and

he is at work. You might have to go through some hard times, hard weeks, months, years maybe, where you're seeing either the husband or the wife doing harmful things or damaging things and it grieves your heart because you're seeing what's going on. Depend on the Lord, let them lead you, guide you, seek counsel from friends who are in the same situation. Your pastor. Trust the body of Christ to give you support.

CAREY:

And I think what I would like to say, most of all is just a, a word of hope here. Remember that even the hardest heart can be changed by the grace of God. I'm just mindful of one of the biblical characters that we look up to so much as the Apostle Paul, but remember who he was before Jesus got ahold of him, he was killing Christians, he was opposing the Christian faith. That means he's that person that believers would look at and go, not that guy. He's never going to become a Christian. But look what God did. He can do that in your situation. And we've got to hold out hope that God can make changes in time

MINDI:

To wrap it up. We just want to encourage you believing spouse to depend on the Lord, to trust him and confidently love your spouse well and love your children well. God will be faithful to bring a beautiful result in your children's hearts and they will see the efforts that you've made in teaching them and training them about the truth.

CAREY:

Amen. As I said before, if you have a question you'd like to submit to have aired on an episode like this, you can go to [god-fearing-kids.com](http://god-fearing-kids.com) and scroll down a bit. There's a button you can click and record in your own voice so that we can answer your question. All right? Let's take a moment to pray together. Our Father, we're grateful for this sister in Christ who has expressed this need, this situation that that is undoubtedly difficult to be in. And I don't know where she is on the spectrum of extremes that we've talked about today, but Lord, I pray that for her specifically, you would strengthen her heart, you would encourage her with, uh, just your love and your grace and your, your overall sovereignty in her situation. And you give her hope that every little seed she's planting in the hearts of her children is going to grow and bear fruit, and that you have this under control even with her spouse not being a believer at this point. Lord, we pray for that man. We ask that you would transform his life by the grace of Jesus through events, through people that come into his, his sphere of influence through books, movies, whatever means you want to use Lord, we ask you to grant him a repentance and bring him to a place of salvation. And we pray for all the other parents who are listening who are in the same predicament. Father, we ask you to make them faithful, make them hopeful. Give them just the joy of knowing that you are walking with them in this difficult circumstance. In Jesus' name, amen.