



Kaley: Well, hello, friends, and welcome back to the Proverbs 31 Ministries Podcast, where we share biblical Truth for any girl in any season. I'm your host, Kaley Olson. I'm here with two, not one, but two cohost and teachers today. You can't see them, but they're very excited to be here. Our president, Lysa TerKeurst, and our director of theology, Joel Muddamalle.

Lysa: Thank you, Kaley. We are excited. I think this is a very important topic.

Kaley: I agree.

Joel: Thanks Kaley. I'm super stoked. This is so cool.

Kaley: Thanks a lot. I'm excited that you guys are here with us today because, for our listeners, you guys need to know that anytime Lysa and Joel are here, you're going to hear something fresh and relevant, and something that challenges you every time, because I know it challenges me every time, and I can't take notes fast enough when they're talking. Wherever you are, if you're driving, please don't take notes right now, but go back and listen to this, and get your notebook out and a pen, because you're going to want to take notes. But today, Lysa and Joel are tackling the topic: when honoring your parents feels impossible. Oh, okay. That's a lot.

Lysa: Take a deep breath.

Kaley: Yes.

Lysa: Because even just that topic, I think just the title of the topic, is something that I want to lean into. I know we're all at different life stages, so let's go around the table first and just say what life stage we're in.

Kaley: Sure. Well, I'll get us started. I am 28. I'll be 29 in about a month, and I have been married to my husband, Jared, for five years. We are both from different states, but I grew up in the south where all of my parents are. After college, moved to here at Charlotte, North Carolina, left everyone back at home. Now, he and I have been living here for a little bit longer than we've been married, but we've been married for five

years now. We've just, I guess, transitioning into what life is as an adult couple together. I don't know if you experienced it.

Lysa: In your own family unity.

Kaley: Yes, in our own family unit, because there's this phase that you go through in the first year or two where you like, okay, I'm here, but am I still part of the family? Are we together? Are we separate or whatever? Now I feel like, okay, we've hit the five-year milestone to where it really feels like, okay, this is us now.

Lysa: I think that's important for you to state that you're in that season because I consider, when I look back at that season, it was a little bit of shock and awe when Art and I first got married, shock in that. What do you mean that's the way your family does things? That's not the way my family does things. And awe is like, wow, that's so cool that your family does that. It was a mix of both, but I think when we're trying to determine what is our family unit going to be like, what are we going to value with our time and money, what are even some of the ways that we express our beliefs and our views and traditions and holidays, and what is the rhythm of our life? What pace are we setting it at? I think all of those are wonderful discoveries that you get to make, but at the same time, it can also provide some disruption to expectations that your parents have.

Maybe especially, in a year where there's going to be holidays, there's going to be an election, there's going to be conversation around different topics, and the way that we set our priorities and parameters around those conversations in our own family unit. This is a complicated topic. We recognize it.

Kaley: Yes. Joel?

Joel: Okay. That's awesome. Kaley, as you were saying that, I went back to when Brittany and I, my wife and I, were first married, first couple of years, and one of the things I remember was there was something so normal that I had been used to about going home for a family gathering. Then all of a sudden, there's this person right next to me who is attached to me, but maybe the chair next to the table that I would normally sit is actually now my sister's chair, but isn't Brit supposed to sit next to me? There are just these things of newness of this relationship. Thank you for that, because I went back to how we navigated through that. I'm 34 years old and my wife, Brittany and I, we've just celebrated 10 years of being married this year, so we're super excited.

We have four children, three little boys under the age of eight, and our little baby girl, Emelia Jane, MJ, who was born smack in the middle of a pandemic. We're excited. I feel like, in terms of Brittany and I, in our relationship, in our marriage, we have an idea, a pretty good idea of where we are. The big thing for us is this uniqueness of having these children that depend on us for survival, to live, but then also, my mom and dad and Brit's mom and dad. I'm from the Chicagoland area. Brit was originally from the Pacific Northwest — Portland California area. If you guys could see me right now, I'm Indian. Did y'all know that I'm Indian? Okay.

Lysa: We not only can we see it, we celebrate it.

Joel: I'm Indian. One of the things of why I'm excited about this topic is in Indian culture, I know so many cultures that are out there, but I know for me personally, Indian culture, honor culture, especially with parents, is super high. It's very common in the Indian family for multiple generations to live underneath one household. Brit grew up in a different context, and so being able to navigate through, even our relationship, with our parents and our extended family, so that's where we're at.

Lysa: So good. Well, and I'm the old one in the group.

Kaley: Mature, Lysa. Mature. You're welcome.

Lysa: So, thank you, Kaley. I'm 50. Art and I have been married for almost 30 years — 28 and counting. We have five grandkids. This topic is important for me to better understand what the Bible says about when you are the parent, and your children are grown, and they're ... My children, Kaley, are in the season that you are in. All of them.

Kaley: How exciting.

Lysa: I think we're going to bring a unique dynamic to the table, because I know what it feels like to be the parent of adult children and to make the necessary adjustments, to give them the freedom, to establish our own family units, while very much bringing to the table my own set of desires of what our family unit will continue to look like. There is this tension there. I think it's important, a couple of words I want to lay on the table, and then, Joel, I want to jump right into the biblical teaching. One is expectations. This is a really big word that I think comes up whenever you're talking about family relationships, and it's easier when your children are smaller to clearly set what is expected from your children when they are being raised.

I think the Bible is very clear about honor your father and your mother. But today, I want to look at both sides of this. I think Joel, the passage that we've picked is going to look at both sides, but I do want a couple words to use some vocabulary. Expectations, I want us to challenge ourselves when we talk about family dynamics to set that word expectations aside. Instead, I'd love for us to use the words "longing," "desire," "want," some of those words, because the word "expectation" brings with it a bit of animosity that I did not understand until I was doing a live Instagram with my counselor recently. I love doing live Instagrams with him because it's like free therapy for me instead of paying \$175. I can speak to him for an hour doing an Instagram live, but I get to bring the topic.

Like, yeah, this is amazing, and then everybody get to simultaneously listen in. Usually, it works amazing, except a good counselor is always looking to see what words you're using, because your words frame your reality. I brought up the topic, I think we should talk about expectations today. I went on for 15 minutes talking about, here's why I think expectations are fascinating, because everyone has realistic expectations and unrealistic expectations. It's really important to decide together in your relationships, what is

realistic, what is unrealistic, and then with those realistic expectations, let's talk about how we can meet those expectations and just on and on and on. After about 15 minutes, I finally stopped to take a breath like what I'm doing right now. My counselor Jim leaned in, and he said, "Lysa, your words frame your reality. Let's look at that word you keep using, expectations, because expectations are really premeditated resentment."

I think that's an important thought to lay here on the table at first. There's a big difference between bringing an expectation, which basically says, I expect you to do this or else, right? This is not only a desire I have, but it is a desire I have that I'm very much feeling like you need to meet and within a certain timeframe and within a certain way. I think that's an important thing. The other thing, the other word, it's also an E word that I want to lay down on the table, it's "extremes." I think sometimes when you hear the word "honor," if you've ever had a situation where the word honor has been taken to an extreme, there's already this built in trigger to that word.

I think Ecclesiastes 7:18 is a good verse to go ahead and establish, we are not talking about extremes here. We are not talking about when honor has been taken to an extreme or when neglect has been taken to extreme. Both, on the side of the parents and the children, and we recognize within the family unit, sometimes there has been a toxic dysfunction that has gone unchecked, where taken to an extreme, it's become very hurtful. Ecclesiastes 7:18 says this. "It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. Whoever fears God will avoid all extremes." I think that is important, that we build some framework around the definitions of the words.

We're not trying to take any of these words to an extreme. We're also not trying to create expectations with premeditated resentments built in. For the sake of our conversation, let's use the word, "longing desire," "biblical instruction," and set aside the word "expectations." If you use it, I'm not going to set off the alarm. I may make the mistake and use it. What we're just saying, like, "hey, let's lean in this way, and let's not take what we're talking about to such extremes like Ecclesiastes just instructed us." Let's avoid those extremes. Joel.

Joel: Yeah. That's so good. I think let's even dive into that expectations idea in terms of how do we approach God's Word. I think often, we approach it, if we're not careful, with the series of expectations that we actually want God's Word to bring to us. Even as we jump into Ephesians 6 and look at verses 1-4, let's lay down and make an intentional decision to lay down what our expectations are, and really look at what is the text getting at? What are the Scriptures getting at? One of the first things we want to do is take a step back and consider what is the context of this text? What's actually taking place for the people of God?

God's Word is not stoic; it's not cold; it's not something that we just look at through a lens as if ... these weren't real life people. They're real life people. This is a real person, Paul, who's speaking to a real church in Ephesus. If you think about your church, let's just take a moment and just talk about your church experience. When you would walk into your church, Kaley, what is your experience of the people who are in the church?

Kaley: My church now, or my church growing up?

Joel: Let's do both.

Kaley: Okay. Growing up, very small, mid-sized Southern Baptist Church, lots of old people mixed with young people. I remember Sunday schools, everybody is welcoming.

Joel: Oh, that's so good.

Kaley: There was coffee.

Joel: Old people mixed with young people. Now, please tell me how the church potlucks.

Kaley: Yes, we did this thing, oh my gosh y'all, I remember it now. It was called [stewiliyup]. It was stewed chili and soup [crosstalk].

Joel: If you could see Lysa's face right now when you said that. This is amazing. Thank you for inviting us all into your experience. This is so good.

Kaley: You're welcome. This is almost as good as shacking Lysa for chicken. That's what makes me think of. I feel like we're going to go down a rabbit trail, but okay.

Joel: This is good.

Kaley: Very country,, very stereotypical, just Southern Baptist Church in the south. Very family-oriented. Now, my church is a multi-ethnic church. It would be what some people will call a "mega church." I don't like calling it a mega church, but there are a lot of people who attend that church. When I go in, I feel chased down by the people who want to say hello to me in the best way. I feel like, growing up, sometimes if you attend a small church, you know the people who are there, but then it's like, you speak to these people, but not to these people. But now, I feel like I want to say hello to everybody because everybody's saying hello to me. It's just a different worship experience than what I was used to, but also a different cultural experience than what I was used to growing up. No stewiliyups.

Joel: No stewiliyups. I think you should bring it back though.

Kaley: No.

Lysa: I'm scared to even say that word. That is quite a word. It's like supercalifragilistic expedialidocious, right?

Joel: Right, right.

Lysa: Okay. Are you at me now, Joel?

Joel: Yeah.

Lysa: Growing up, church was not a consistent experience for me, so I did not have a consistent church experience growing up. I probably can't even answer that question. I do remember we went to different churches at different times, but then we would also have stretches where church wasn't really a part of our life. Now, I go to also a multi-ethnic church that is very good at ... I can walk in with my family, that's a multiethnic family, and we feel at home and like we found our place there. I think that's really good. We don't ever have potlucks or soup deluxes, or whatever you're saying. I don't think I've ever been to one of those.

Joel: That's so good. My church experience, I grew up in going to a church that was primarily, I would say Caucasian, primarily white for a season, and then they became really multiethnic, like Latinos and then Indian families. It was a really incredible experience. But as I mentioned, I'm Indian, my parents actually were part of an Indian church. On Saturday nights, we would go to an Indian church, and then on Sundays we would go to our other church. One of the things about the Indian church is that everybody was together all the time. We didn't really have, and alluded to it, we didn't really have like Sunday school for the kids. All the kids were there, all the parents there, and they're there together. When we look at Ephesians 6, notice the very first word that is out there is the word "children."

When we look at the Greek text here, it would have been so helpful, Paul, if I was talking to Paul, I'd say, "Paul, this would have been so helpful if you use the technical word for little children, or if you use the technical word for adolescent children," which actually isn't even one in the Greek language, or if you use the technical term for an adult child. But the phrase that he uses is a generic term. It could encompass a young child, an infant, all the way to an adult child who is out of the house and has their own established family, and yet there's still a child to somebody else. The church in Ephesus, Paul describes exactly, Kaley, what you and Lysa just described. It is a church that is a multi-ethnic church, multicultural, socio-economically diverse.

There are different people from different backgrounds that are all coming together, and they've been knit together in this powerful way by the spirit of God. Here's the one unique thing about the church in Ephesus. The church in Ephesus, though, is split up into smaller home churches. So, there would be smaller pockets of churches, and so you'd have these families that would gather together. As Paul says this, I want us to have this in mind. Imagine being in that environment with people from different backgrounds, but your kids who are there as well. Maybe you're that adult child, maybe you're that infant child. This is what Paul says in Ephesians 6, and I want to read the whole way through from verses 1-4.

Paul says, *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right."* Then he says, *"Honor your father and mother, this is the first commandment with a promise, that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."* Now, I know the first half of this verse is one of our favorite ones, right? On Mother's Day or Father's Day, we want shirts that are printed that say that phrase *"Honor your father and father and mother."* This is a unique verse because this is one of the only places

where you actually have the promise or the ... I'm going to teach us that it's a principle that comes after it. Paul says, "This is the first commandment with a promise." He's quoting from Exodus Chapter 20:20.

Notice what Paul is doing. He's actually giving the people in this various diverse background a history lesson of their origins of sort. He's saying this idea of honor, of obedience, of loving kindness towards your family is not something new that came post-Jesus. In fact, this is rooted in the very fabric of our existence when we're formed into and become part of the family of God. Now, at this point, I think we've got a bit of questions. For instance, what does it actually mean to obey your parents? Isn't it interesting, in verse 2, it starts with the word honor? What's the difference between honor and obey?

Lysa: Okay. Because verse 1, children obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Verse 2, honor your father and mother. It seems like there's two distinct situations happening.

Joel: Exactly. This is actually why I think Paul is very intentional in why he uses this generic word for children, because he's going to, and we're going to see some very specific instances, like the difference between obey and honor, that he's going to say, depending on your context — so Kaley, for your situation, Joel, for my situation, for Lysa, for your situation, depending on where we are, we're going to have to do some work to say, "okay, based off of this, here's a response in terms of what honor and obedience look like for based off of our place in our life and in our relationship with our parents." Let me just give this big idea of honor. I would say that the biblical view of honor is a heart posture towards somebody. It's a heart posture towards somebody that's filled with reverence and respect. A heart posture filled with reverence and respect.

I think of people like Moses and Pharaoh, when we read the interaction between the two, Moses says some really harsh things to Pharaoh, but he actually always says it within the context of respect. Pharaoh is still Pharaoh. When you think of Daniel and his situation, he always treats the King with respect and honor, right? This is about our heart attitude. That's one of the first guts checks we want to make, is say, okay, what is my heart attitude? Obedience is actually a fruit of honor. If honor's on the left-hand side, obedience is on the far-right hand side, and it's the extreme overflow of honor. Obedience in this context, we really want to pay attention and say, okay, what is obedience connected to?

Now, we have to remember that the Bible is written in Greek, and it was translated into English. When we read it, Lysa and Kaley, when we read it, we say, "children obey your parents in the Lord." It seems very clear, right? Obey your parents. Then there's this afterthought in the Lord, and then it moves on, "*Honor your father and mother.*" When we actually look at the Greek, and I know this was something, Lysa, that you were intrigued by. I want you to just share your thoughts on this. But when we look at the Greek, the word "obey," the Greek word, "obey," is not connected to your parents, it's actually connected to the phrase in the Lord. We've translated these, children obey your parents in the Lord, because it's probably the easiest way to understand it.

But again, our expectations is that in order of priority, there's children, there's obey, there's your parents, and then the afterthought is in the Lord. But because of the way that the Greek is built, actually I would translate this way. Children obey, in the Lord, your parents, for this is right. So, thoughts on that?

Lysa: Yeah. I remember exactly where I was when you and I were talking about this verse and how you said, "Lysa, you have to attach the obedience to the Lord." I just had to pause for a minute and go, wow. Because I think we have to remember, sometimes people are in situations with their parents where it almost feels as if we're going to have to make a choice. Do we honor and obey the Lord, or do we honor and obey our parents if our parents are asking us to do something that is not in keeping with God's Word? There are complications to this. I've also heard this verse weaponized. I'm very careful to try not to ever weaponize it with my children. With apologies to my children if I have ever done this to you, disclaimer there, I do think it's important, like we said at the beginning, not to take this to extremes.

It's not that we don't want to obey our parents, but I do think it's important to keep it in the context of making sure we're obedient to the Lord. I was really excited when we were studying this because I thought the Bible is not asking me to not honor God's Word.

Joel: Yeah.

Kaley: This is good. I keep thinking about ... y'all, this is silly, but training my dog versus being trained as a child growing up where, when I'm training my dog, I start with obedience and I don't start with honor. I discipline, it's like, if you do this, Penny, you will get a treat. So, she does it based on the reward, and so it's not from a heart posture, but this helps me so much in just seeing how it comes from the heart posture of honor and obedience as a response to that, that doesn't need a reward. As a kid, you're coaxed with like, "Oh, you'll get ice cream or you'll get this if you do this," but obedience won't last if it's only based on what I'm going to get out of it, if it's only going to last if I'm going to be honoring first. That's so eye-opening.

Lysa: Yeah, I think you're bringing up a really good point too. Of course, we've got children of different stages, Joel, but I think there are different seasons when you are raising children, where you need to understand when it's time to make a transition. This has been one of the most challenging things to me as I look back. I've been raising children now for a long time, a long time. Our sons are just knocking on the door of 30, and we adopted them when they were, I think, 11 and 12, or 12 and 13 years old. Then our daughters, we've had since birth. There have been different seasons where I, as a parent, have had to step back and say, I'm trying to shape and mold and guide my children, but I have to recognize their different seasons. When they're younger, I need to establish what the rules are and I need to establish how we are going to follow the rules.

Then there comes this moment, and it's not like you wake up that morning and there's a big flashing neon light that says, "Joel, today's the day." You start transitioning your

older son from being spoken to as a child to being talked with, because he has a different capacity to understand that this isn't just about me shaping your behavior; it's about me helping guide your heart so that the behavior becomes a natural overflow of a heart that's been shepherded well. I think that's really important. I love this, that we, in order to properly guide our children's hearts, the Lord has to be part of that, so that it's a simultaneous understanding of these principles and these rules, but what's most important is that it's an overflow ... Your obedience is an overflow of a heart that's already been guided really well by biblical principles.

Joel: This is so good. I think when we look at that very first verse, we say, okay, pastor Paul, right? Because he's pastor Paul in the church in Ephesus. He said "children," and he has these sentences directed towards children. But then in verse 4, he shifts, and he says "fathers," and he goes right away from the expectation. We're not using the word expectation, the longing, the desire ...

Lysa: The teaching.

Joel: The teaching ...

Lysa: The instruction.

Joel: ... the instruction for these children, but then he goes right into the longing, desire, teaching for the father. Now, some of y'all are like, "wait a minute, Joel, how come in the first verse or second verse, it says, 'honor your father and mother,' and then in verse 4, it's like fathers, what happened to mom?" Well, I did some study in this because I was curious about this. In the Greco-Roman world, this is really interesting, the expectation, the way the family system was set up is that the mom would actually handle the majority of the educational responsibilities up to a time period when the child hits adolescence, maybe a little bit older or those early twenties. Think college age, you graduate high school.

At that point, it would actually be the father's responsibility to step in because now you're thinking about vocation, which ... You would typically do what your dad did, something along those lines. The father would step in to do it. Again, remember when we talked about that first word "children" and the complexity, why? Well, because this encompasses this entire range of children from the infants that have already been addressed, but then this idea of fathers of saying, okay, there's a range of ages. Then, this is what Paul says, "*Fathers do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*" I love this because what you both have just taught us is exactly what Paul is getting at when he's speaking to moms and dads in terms of how they're supposed to raise, train and instruct their children.

Lysa, in your Bible, because we already know Joel's reading from the ESV. The ESV says discipline, but I want to just say that we're equal here, and I actually really love what the NIV says. [inaudible] NIV.

Lysa: Praise the Lord. Okay, "*Fathers do not exasperate your children.*"

Joel: I love that. I actually love that word.

Lysa: I do too. Tell me exactly what this means, because I want to really understand this.

Joel: Yeah, exactly.

Lysa: Before my children weaponize this against me.

Joel: Yeah. I actually really like the NIV.

Lysa: No, I have great kids, but ahead. Yes, you do.

Joel: No, I love this because what Paul's getting at is don't create a system. Don't create a system where your kids are set up for failure.

Lysa: Say it again, Joel. That is so good.

Joel: Do not create a system that sets up your kids for failure. Now look, I'm just going to be very personal, y'all. My oldest son and my middle son and my youngest son are three very different sons. What happens sometimes ...

Lysa: Who, by the way, prayed for me yesterday.

Joel: They did.

Lysa: They are the sweetest boys in the whole world. Joel, whenever you do exasperate them, auntie Lysa ...

Joel: Yeah. You're going to come for me.

Lysa: I'm going to come for you, have them over to my house.

Joel: They won't want to leave. One of the things that I have realized in this, this is the verse that's convicting for me, is that, at times, I have expectations of my middle child that are really appropriate for my older child. When I do that to my middle child, Levi, I actually set up a system of expectation, which we already know is not the word we want to use here, but a system that is going to exasperate him because it's actually setting him up for failure. So, I really need to step back and consider, what is the appropriate system structure, relationship, responsibility that I'm to have with my children, I think this is the hard work of parenting, and we all know this, and even as children, like with our siblings.

They're very different from who we are. Sometimes it's like, "Man, can't you just treat me the way that my brother, Noel, was treated?" My mom's like, "No, because you're not him. You're somebody different." When Paul says this, if I'm a dad, I'm just, again, pastor Paul is preaching, and I'm a dad and I listened to him say this, I'm going, ooh. There's a bit of a gut check here, because we just got set up. See, I'm looking at my kids. Did you just hear what pastor Paul said? Obey your mother and father. Honor them.

Then right with an uppercut comes, and by the way, parents, you have an equal and arguably, and I'm going to bring this up here, a greater responsibility, to set up the system for the benefit of your children, to set them up to actually, not just honor you, but when children honor their parents, it's actually, we're going to talk about this, a formation of the heart that teaches them how to honor the Lord.

This is actually instructive, not just in human-to-human relationships, but this is an instruction for them to experience a lifelong eternity, long relationship with God, the Father. Now, how do we know that? Well, the word "discipline" that is brought up now, Lysa, go to that one, because you said the provoke word, but how does that finish in the NIV?

Lysa: Verse 4?

Joel: Yes.

Lysa: Okay. *"Fathers, do not exasperate your children. Instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."*

Joel: In the ESV, that word "training" is translated to "discipline." I really like training. When I got into the essence of this word, the word is actually about the formation of a human being. So, the systems, the relationship, what are we talking about? We're actually talking about, not just A plus B equals C, we're teaching math or arithmetics or sociology. We're actually talking about who is the type of individual, the person, the human that our children are becoming? I actually think this is one of those circles because as we're forming our children to be a type of people, young men, young women that have such an honor for the Lord, first and foremost, because they've seen it evidenced in our own lives, I have to believe that we're actually paving the path and creating a fertile ground for a future relationship that we're going to have with our children that I can imagine.

I'm curious, how does that look with you and your kids? Because with my kids, it's not there, but it seems like there is an anticipation for a future relationship with your adult children that will look different. I want to bring up one more unique thing about verse 4, the word "but," there, but bring them up in the discipline. We read over that, and it's like, okay, but bring them up. The Greek word there is *Allah*, and it could probably be better translated as "on the contrary." It is an emphatic, the word is an adversative. It is there with massive emphasis. If you're sitting there, and you're listening to Paul speak, which we miss sometimes while we're reading, but if we listen to him speak, we would all stop, because he just elevated his voice, his tone, his pitch.

This is a word that was used to stop you in your tracks and to show a massive juxtaposition. Don't provoke your children, but please, he's pleading with them, please bring them up for the formation of their hearts and their lives, in what? The instruction of the Lord. We're seeing a full picture here of what it means to honor your father and your mother. It's instructive, not just for children, young children and adult children, but it's super instructive for us as parents as well.

Lysa: So good Joel. There are three things that I would say I try to keep in mind, or I've tried to keep in mind as I was raising my kids that I think helped this. We have really good relationships with all five of our kids. I think that we did a lot wrong. I want to clearly state, there are definitely times where I can look back and go, "wow, I totally probably exacerbated that child, and that child, and that child at this time, and this time, and this time." Okay, so now that we've gotten that out of the way, because I think it's important to know we're not talking about doing this with perfection. We're talking about doing it with intentionality.

I can give you three things, and this is the kind of conversation we would have, Joel, if we were just sitting there, and Kaley, you and Jared might lean into and just talk about like, "hey, raising kids is not for the faint at heart." It is a huge responsibility. I would say one thing that Art and I did that we were very intentional about is one of our highest priorities in raising our kids was to keep them talking. Now, this ran a little bit against the norms in our Southern roots, because at times, this can be this cultural thing, like "don't talk back." I get it. In other words, don't say things back to your parents that just demonstrate your disrespect or disregard for what they're saying.

While we did not encourage disrespect in our home, we did encourage our children to continue the conversation. The reason this was so important is because if we can keep them talking, then we can keep engaging them, and if we can keep engaging them, we have a much better chance at helping navigate and steer their thought processes so that we set them up to make wiser choices for themselves, biblically and emotionally. Keep them talking. That was really important. Of course, there were parameters around that. I have one child that asks more questions than you could possibly imagine. So, keep them talking, at certain times, started to feel like I'm not going to be able to do this and keep my sanity.

It didn't mean giving them free reign to talk all the time. It meant enter into dialogue, ask them questions, "help me understand." Really, instead of negating their feelings, really leaning into them and saying, "I believe you. I believe that that is how you feel." But my child that asked too many questions about probably three o'clock. If it was a particularly good day, it may be more like five o'clock, six o'clock when the questions continued and the questions continued, I would say to her, "Sweetheart, you've got three questions left for the rest of the day. Use them wisely." Now, here's what's really funny. Her husband now says that to her.

Joel: No way. That's amazing.

Lysa: Yes. Thank you. Have a nice day. Okay, so keep them talking. Number two is be a student of your child. Joel, you've already hinted at this. Different children process life in different ways. They're bringing so many unique bent. While we want a system that is consistent, we also want to make sure that we navigate our children as individuals because they are very individual. I think it's important to be careful not to really hurt a child of a certain bent because they are processing life differently than the other children. You know this, Joel, with having four kids; I have five, so they are so very

different in the way that they approach life. Sometimes I had to say to my children to “honor and appreciate your differences.”

Things may not always appear equal, but we will make them as fair as possible. In other words, when you are generous with a child and they are continuing to handle that generosity with appropriate amounts of gratitude and the ability to share and all of that, they're putting on demonstration, you can entrust me with more, but if a child is starting to develop some sort of mentality of entitlement or lack of appreciation, or the ability not to share, then you may have to adjust your generosity because you don't want to over-give and set up something that's going to be detrimental for them long-term. The third thing that I would say is very, very important, and this is one that I'm still trying to improve on to this day, is part of, I think not exasperating our children, is to ask them, “do you have this to give or do you not have this to give?”

And not set up everything so rigidly that you're making demands, but rather you set them up to be successful. In other words, like I love to play games. My family knows that I love to play games.

Joel: Who won last night?

Lysa: That would be me. You can see it on Hope's Instagram.

Joel: I saw it. Yeah.

Lysa: Yes. Anytime, Joel, you see me stand up, raise my arms in victory.

Joel: I saw it. I was like, she must have won.

Lysa: Thank you. Thank you for bringing that up. I'm very proud of my win last night. Now, obviously you'll have to adjust this as your children are younger, but now, I have to give my kids the freedom. When I say, “Hey, let's have a family game night tonight,” I have to quickly add, “do you have that to give, or do you not have that to give?” I think that's important to just start to shepherd your child's heart at a young age to say, “I respect you as an individual.” Part of how I had to do this when they were young children, obviously if I said clean the kitchen, do you have it to give, do you not have to give? They would all say no, we don't have that together. Obviously this has to be scaled a little bit, but I would have to ask my kids or give them room to be successful.

Like, here's my expectation that you clean these dishes by this point. Obviously, expectation, we're being careful. Here's my desire. Here's what I would like for you to do. Here's my instruction to you as a parent. I want you to clean these dishes, and they do need to be cleaned by this point, but there's a little freedom here. If you want to first go make a phone call before you clean the dishes, I'm not going to see that as disrespect, because I have so much confidence that the dishes will get done, that is part of your responsibility, but it needs to be done by this time, and how you do it is up to you, just as long as it's done correctly.

I think that helping give children the ability in increasing ways, as they grow older, helps set a tone for them when they are older, that you aren't there to dictate that they answer to your beck and call every time, but rather, you set that tone, do you have this to give and do you not have this to give? That is really amazing, even as parents, to model for your kids, because you want your kids, your adult kids did do that same thing for you.

Kaley: Wow.

Lysa: Those are three things. Now, of course, when you talk about being the parent of older children and making sure that you also respect the boundaries that your older children then will bring as they establish their own families in their own homes, it cannot be seen as them dishonoring. There's a big difference between them doing life differently and them dishonoring you.

Joel: Wow, that's good.

Lysa: I think that if, this would be a much longer discussion, but I think that if you, as a parent, have modeled this in their growing up years, that you're going to give them space to make their own choices. When they do make their own choices, it won't be seen as a personal attack or a personal disrespect to you. I think you can give them freedom. Now, obviously, boundaries go both ways. When I say boundaries, I don't mean pushing the other person away. I mean holding yourself together, communicating, "this feels safe, this doesn't feel safe, this feels reasonable, this doesn't feel reasonable," which takes it all the way back to the first principle I said, and that is keep them talking. Clarity is always a conversation away. I think some of the Scripture teaching that you've brought to the table would make a fantastic family conversation.

How do we live this out? We're not trying to establish the foundation of all of this teaching on our own. We're using God's Word. God's Word is timeless, it is relevant, it's important, so how can we come together, parents and children, young and old, and talk about this verse in such a way that we're not afraid of other people sharing, hey, here's something that you could do better because we know they're going to bring also the sensitivity, here's something I could do better? I think that's all part of establishing a family where honor and honoring the Lord together is what's important.

Kaley: Wow, this is so good. I feel like there's so much more that we could talk about, but what I'm taking away from this is just that, whoever's listening, whether you're maybe 28, almost 29 like me, maybe you're in your mid-30s like Joel, maybe you're mature like Lysa, and you have ...

Lysa: I love how you phrase that.

Kaley: You're so mature at Lysa, and you're stylish and all that, but no matter what age you are, I feel like there's a lot to ... This teaching is heavy in a way because everybody is bringing their own history into this. We didn't even talk about that today, which I think would be a good conversation for a later time at some point, or we've got there being

theology resources on that too. But this is something that we all need to go to open-handed with and say, "God, what do you have for me with this?" I think for the people who have grown up with less than honoring parents, or maybe you're struggling with that, it's not too late for you to start either, and whatever that looks like for you.

Lysa: I think that's so good, Kaley, and I do think it would be important to recognize that, if you are in a toxic or dysfunctional situation, there's a lot of pain that happens here. There are parents that I'm sure we will hear from that will say my kids haven't talked to me in 20 years. There's a lot of pain wrapped up in that. Then there's also some adult children that we'll probably hear from that says, "I've tried to live out this verse, and it's only served to put me in a state of extreme mental unhealth, and it's been something I've been working on with my therapist" and all that. We want to say, remember, like we said at the beginning, there are things that have to be paid attention to if there's an extreme example of hardship or hurt here.

We do have some excellent Therapy in Theology recordings from this podcast that would be very helpful, and boundaries, the one we did on boundaries is one of those. So, it is not disrespectful to your parents to lovingly and respectfully communicate a boundary. The only time someone would have a problem with a boundary is if the boundary's really needed. I think that's important to establish, but we are for families, we are for you. If you are a parent, we are for you. If you are the children, I'm so thankful we have God's word to guide us the whole way through.

Kaley: Absolutely. Well, thank you guys for being here today. I do have one great resource that I want to point our listeners to now that you can take action on immediately. It's something that our teams pulled together, and it's called "Now What?" which is so fitting for after you've listened to a podcast like this, where there's a lot of heavy stuff that you've got a process, or whatever you're learning at church, in your Bible study, or whatever. It's a free resource that you can download. You can print it off, and it will guide you through how to practically apply the message that you heard, and so I think that's perfect for today.

It's in our show notes on our website at proverbs31.org/listen. You can download that and share it with your friends. All right, well guys, thank you again for being here today. This is all we have time for. I've enjoyed this. Guys, thank you for listening. We pray that this teaching today helped you know the Truth of God's Word and helps you live out that truth because we know when you do, it changes everything.