

the
PROVERBS 31
MINISTRIES
podcast

Biblical truth for any girl in any season.

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Lisa Jacobson: Okay, so today I thought we would talk about parenting your child's mind. And the reason I want to talk about this is because our thoughts are so incredibly powerful and I think we know that but when we really consider how, how our thoughts influence our perspective, our view of ourselves and the world around us, they impact our choices and even guide our actions and so with that looming in front of us, and if you're a parent, and you consider this, we think, how we have this amazing opportunity to help our children with what, and even how they think. And what I mean by that is just what they do with their thoughts. And from there, we can gently lead them to the love and truth found in God's Word, and what a beautiful gift we can give to our children.

When I first became a parent, I was so clueless, I can't begin to tell you. In fact, my firstborn was the first baby I remember, ever remember holding in my hands. Like that's how new this whole thing was for me that I almost felt like they had no business handing me this baby because I didn't know what I was doing. And immediately my focus began on, on just caring for this little baby's body, you know that he would be fed, that he would get sleep, that he would be warm, and then as he started kind of moving around, and toddling around, I was trying to keep him from falling, from getting burnt, from choking or so many things. It was a full-time job just, and he's a very adventurous little kid so I think I, I had my work cut out for me. But then when he was about three, and by then he was joined by two little sisters, in fact, I should just pause and just say I, I am a mother of eight children. And yes, they are all mine. And there are no twins, I just had one right after the other.

So, but if you told me back then when I was so overwhelmed with just my first, I never would have believed you, like I probably would have of just said like Sarah like that, that will never happen. So come a long way, but anyway, so here I am, he's about three, and a neighbor friend of mine gave me this article on caring for your child's heart, just protecting it, looking after it. And for me, this was like that a turning point in my parenting because it was a huge aha, not that my heart was engaged with my children, but this was big picture stuff. This was a long-term goal of, of looking after their hearts. And I think now this is very much more common than then back 27 years ago when I first started parenting, because now I feel like this is part of the conversation, we're really aware that that our children's hearts matter, that we need to care for them. But back then this was new to me.

So, for the next 10 years or so I was all about their heart, connecting with their hearts, looking after their hearts, finding Scripture that talks about their hearts. And then I had what I call the second awakening, which, which came out of a conversation I had with one of my little girls, my daughter, and it was a sunny summer afternoon, and we were out playing on the lawn, and she came up to me and she just had the saddest eyes and she said, Mom, do you think I'm pretty? And she is a lovely little girl? Why she would even have to ask that I don't know. So, I just immediately start asking her questions like where did you get this from? Why, why are you asking this? And it came out that there were a couple of mean little girls at Sunday School of all places that has said some pretty awful things to her, and they had really gotten into her head. And she really, at a young age of seven, doubting her appearance and her value. And of course, I was horrified, just horrified.

And so, for the first time, I turned to her, and I said, honey, you are so beautiful to me and to God. And if you're listening to this and you caught that this was the first time, I'd ever said this to her, you would be correct. And it was the first time and I have a reason for it. I'm not saying it's a good reason, but I did have a reason for it. Because earlier on I had read yet another article, but from a totally different source and in this article, it talked about not commenting on your children's appearance. I think, I think the reasoning was something to do with not wanting to encourage shallowness in your kids and not wanting it to be surface as you should focus on the more substantive parts of your children. So, I took it to heart, and I avoided saying anything about their appearance as much as possible. Which if you think about it is really unnatural so just forgive me, my poor kids.

And so, in fact, I'll just have to say that now, the same daughter is in her 20s, and recently, I was on the phone with her —she lives across the country from me— and we were talking, and I said oh, honey, that picture you posted on Instagram, you were so beautiful. She goes, Mom, I didn't have any makeup on, she goes my hair was in a messy bun, you just always think I'm beautiful. You know what? It's true? I do. And I'm glad you know it, I'm glad you realize that I do think you're beautiful. And so, this second awakening was this idea that it's not just their hearts that I want to look after, I want to look after their minds. I want to know what they're thinking, and I want to help them with their thoughts. Because I don't know about you but for me, well into my adulthood, well, well into my adulthood, I struggled with those thoughts in my head and once somebody said something like those little girls said to my daughter in Sunday school, it would stick in my head and it informed me who I was for many, many years to come. And I didn't know that I had an option. I thought thoughts were just thoughts, and she was stuck with them. And they stuck to the side of my head, they, as we, you know, just started off, saying that they influenced how I viewed myself, how I viewed the world. Instead of realizing that I'm not a victim to my thoughts, there are things that I can do to determine which thoughts I can allow in and which thoughts I won't. And that we actually have what it takes to strengthen and protect our minds. So, I think of all that, and I think of how I can help my children start to learn that and equip them with that, what an amazing, amazing opportunity. It doesn't solve everything. We all know that, but it sure can go a long way.

So, the first question is, how can you help your child strengthen and protect his or her mind? And we'll just go straight to the Bible, there's so many verses in the Bible about your mind and your thoughts. And again, I always kind of was drawn to those verses that talk about your heart, which are super important so I'm not taking away from that, I'm just adding to that, that the Bible talks a lot about this. And the verse that comes to mind is Ephesians, 4:23-24 and it talks about being "*renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness, and holiness*". So, this idea that we can renew the spirit of your minds, so, and when I hear that, I think this is way more than just logic and rationale, this has to do with that, that that spirit within you, within your soul, those thoughts that go floating through your head. So, the first thing you can do is just point your child to what the Bible says is true rather than what others might have said, or what he's just come to falsely believe. And I'll just give an example. If your child is little, maybe one of these older, he might come in and he'll say, I'm so stupid. And at our house, that's, that's like cursing, like I just get irate right away, just jump on that, nope, we don't talk like that. That is not allowed in our home. But I'm kind of exaggerating, but kind of not, but you can take this same child, whether they're four, or they're 14 and you can just, for instance, just turn to Psalm 139 and just say, look at, look at this is what God says about you. And this is the truth it is, "*For you formed my inward parts you knitted me together in my mother's womb, I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works. My soul knows it very well.*" And I would just jump on that, "I'm fearfully and wonderfully made". And I want my child, I want them to embrace that with all their heart and just know right down to their toes. So, I might just write this scripture out and slap it on the refrigerator or on the bathroom mirror, just all over the home just remember that this is who they are.

And you know, as I'm sharing this with you, I also can imagine that there are at least a few of you who are listening to this and just saying, yeah, but what if I don't feel this way? Like, what if I struggle with this? How can I pass this along to my kids, if I don't even know this down to my toes? And I'll just say, Friend, I, I hear you. I am one of those moms that grew up alongside my kids and I would encourage you not to let that hold you back. Don't wait until you've got it all together until you've got it down pat, before you pass these things on to your kids. There's nothing wrong, especially if your kid is old enough, you might even want to say hey, you know what, mom is working on this too and I would love to learn this together and steep in this together. And it's a beautiful, just uniting thing, rather than something that is, that's a distance between you two. So, it's a wonderful opportunity.

Okay, so pointing your child to what the Bible says is true. And then the second part of just helping your child to strengthen and protect his or her mind is to fill your child's mind with biblical and positive encouraging statements that stick. And as you can tell, I'm a big believer in this because I've seen the impact in our own home from these kinds of things. And starting with the idea that this is, you want to be biblical, and I emphasize this because there are a lot of really catchy statements out there that are actually from the world and are not true. And I'll just pull it out here something like, everything's going to be great. Well, who doesn't want to hear that? Of course, you know, I want to know that I want to

hear that, but if you've been around for any time at all, you know that, that this isn't true, everything's not going to be great. And I'm not doing my child any favor by filling their mind with that kind of thinking. Instead, what I'd rather do is fill their mind with what the Bible says is things like, God will always be with you, you are never alone. And that way, at some point in their life when they do face hard things, rather than the huge disappointment of wait a minute, this is not great. There's nothing great about this at all. Instead, in their mind is that truth that, wait a minute, this is really hard, but God is with me, I'm not alone in this. And that is something I sure wish I would have understood from a much younger age, then, than just now really coming to grips with that. So, it doesn't always have to be all Bible and Scripture, even though I'm a big fan of it, but there's also just some positive and true statements you can just put in your child's mind. So, for instance, in our family, we have this motto, Jacobson's never give up. And from the earliest age, my husband was always saying this, like, our first little guy would be trying to climb up on the couch, he's about two, and he's like, oh, struggling, struggling and, and just ready to, you know, give it all up. And as we say, Jacobson's never give up. So, we kept trying, and they finally get on the couch, and everybody would cheer, you did it! So that is a mantra that that our whole home is just known for. And now that our kids, many of our kids are out and about in their own careers and starting their own lives all over the country, they said, you know that that that phrase is in their mind, so that when they face hard things, they go, you know what, Jacobson's don't give up. And it's a very positive thing. And, and something that gives them that that little umph when you're, when you're in a tough spot.

Okay, so, next question is, how can you help your child overcome negative, discouraging or destructive thoughts, because like I said, as much as you try to protect your child, you can't protect them from everything. So, here's another great Scripture that talks about this very thing, and it's down in 2 Corinthians 10:3-6. And I would encourage you if you are following along to read the whole passage, but for today, we're just going to focus on the first five, *"We destroy arguments, and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ"*. What an amazing opportunity to be able to take our thoughts captive. And so many of us, don't we just feel victim to our own thoughts, we feel helpless. I know I did. And so, to be able to teach my kids that we can literally capture those thoughts, which are untrue, or unhelpful, and that we can take charge of our thoughts. This is a, this is a beautiful, a beautiful truth that we're, but because we're not aware of it, we don't know to do it. And even when my kids were really young, I started having a picture, this idea of capturing your thoughts, just taking them in their hands and, and throwing them out, and not letting them camp in their minds. And that's an important first half of this battle. But the second half is to correct and replace any of that negative self-talk. So, both things are true, I want to remove what's not true, but I also want to make sure they have something that is true. And I'll go back to Scripture for this one as well.

Here's another incident happened in our home, our, one of our little boys, we call them although now they're teenagers, and they're almost all six feet tall so I need to stop calling them the little boys. But they, one of the little guys was struggling with night fears, just nightmares, and before he went to bed, he had just the worst thoughts and fears come into his head. And we prayed with him, we prayed for

him, and we just didn't feel like we were making a lot of progress and it was a deep concern to me. And then his older sister heard about this, and she came to him, and she said, you know, Dallas, did you know that the Bible, she talks about that we're not to have a spirit of fear, but of love and of power and have a strong mind? And he said no, I didn't know that. And so, she wrote out the verse for him and then together they found this little Dollar Tree, cheap picture frame I had laying around the house and put it in the picture frame and placed it right over his bed and gave him a little flashlight so that when he was afraid in the night, he could look over at that Scripture and remind himself not only that he wasn't going to, to entertain those evil thoughts, but he was going to focus on what was true and right.

Okay, and that leads us to the third question, which is how you fill your child's mind with good, encouraging and edifying thoughts. Here's a passage of Scripture that most of us, I think are familiar with. It's found in Philippians 4:8," *Finally brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there's any excellence, if there's anything worthy of praise, think about these things.*" I love this command, I love that we're actually instructed, think about these, take the time be intentional about thinking about these things. So, as a parent, we can speak uplifting and encouraging words, things that are honorable, things that are lovely, commendable, and we can speak those words to our child, often, and frankly, on repeat. I don't think they could ever hear too much of this.

Recently, this, an opportunity for this, I try to speak this, these kinds of things into my children's hearts and lives often but we had this opportunity just last Sunday because we got home from church and walked in the house and I, you know, kind of dumped off my purse and my Bible and all my church stuff and was just making a beeline for the Sunday afternoon nap. But as I walked by the stairs, our youngest son, who's 14, was just sitting at the bottom of the steps. He had his hands down in his head in his head down his hands and was so downcast and I was surprised. He's usually a very cheerful, very buoyant young man and this was unlike him. And so, I said, hey, you know, what, what's going on? Nothing. Is there, did something happened at church? No. Is there's something weighing on you? No. But clearly there's something that was, so I just thought, oh, okay. So, I tried a bunch of different questions, and he just wasn't forthcoming. So, I thought, well, if you won't talk to me, there's not much I can do for him. And just being honest here. So, I start walking to my bedroom, but then I felt that conviction, the Holy Spirit, that oh, Lisa, you need to go back there, and you need to be with him. Okay, I know. So, I said, okay, hey, let's go up to the, we have an extra room, kind of a bonus room, and I said, let's go up there and why don't we just hang out together. I'll read my book, you can listen to your music, and we'll just hang. And so, he agreed and, and he kind of just listened to his music. And I was kind of reading my book but mostly I was just praying for him. And then after he dozed off for a little bit himself, he, when he woke up, I turned to him and this is what I felt like the Lord was prompting me to do, and I just said, do you realize how gifted you are? Do you know how smart I think you are? And how kind. And then for the first time that afternoon, he kind of got this little full half grin on his face. He said, well, keep going. Kind of joking, but kind of serious, too. And I thought, okay, I'm going to take it seriously and I am going to keep going and I just began listing all the things that I or at least many of the

things that I appreciate about him, and giving him specific examples, not just compliments, not just fluffing or puffing him up, but, but really genuine things that I see in him.

And he opened up, he started sharing about how he felt like he doesn't fit in anywhere. And I know he'd had some disappointing friendship relationships and just didn't know what God had for him in his life. And I remember being 14 and how I felt that same way, and how I struggled with how do I fit in, what do people think of me? Do I have anything to offer? And I didn't share that with anybody, because I didn't know you could share that with anybody. But I also didn't really have anybody speaking into my life saying, this is what's true, this is what God has for you. And those are powerful words that every person needs to hear. I'm picking on 14, because I find that is an age that, just can be an extra challenging age, but there are lots of challenging ages. So it was, again, just that example of what's going on in your child's mind and the power you can have as a parent to not only pray for them, but actually speak words of truth into their minds. So just in closing, let's just consider what you can do if you're a parent and listening to this what you can do for your child's mind, starting today. And there is so much you can do and the beauty of it is it doesn't matter what age your child is.

If your child is three or if they're 13, or even if they're 23 it's never too late. It's always a good time to start speaking words of affirmation, words of loving truth into your child's heart and mind and if this is new to you, and you're thinking, I feel, I would feel so awkward or my child would think I was so strange if I started speaking these big sweeping words of truth into my kids, kids' ears, I would say don't let that hold you back. Even if you have to plan ahead and write them out what you're going to say, it's what I did. My husband on the other hand, he is a natural. When it comes to building up our kids, it just comes out of his mouth. He calls our kids warriors and, you know, I'd already told you Jacobson's never gave up. He's got all kinds of these phrases. But for me, I just felt, I don't know, I felt a little late and when I was doing this, I thought, oh, are they going to turn around and think, what is mom doing now. And the first time I tried it, and I mean, try it in terms of saying something to my child, that was an intentional word of affirmation it was our, one of our sons, and he was in the laundry and washing eggs, because we have chickens, and he just had a tough day where everything went wrong. He had broken some eggs, he had messed up on some things he was supposed to have done and he was, he was pretty, feeling pretty low on himself. And I came to him, and I just put my hand on the shoulder, and I said, do you know that I believe God has big things in store for you. And I just waited for him to start laughing. But you know what he did, he actually stopped washing the eggs and he looked around and he looked at my eyes, he said, really, you really believe that? Oh, son, yes, with all my heart. And, and I couldn't believe how much he received that, and how easy it was. And from then on, I just really wanted to be super intentional about speaking these things into my child's heart and minds.

So just for yourself, consider taking the next, let's just say 10 days, and intentionally speak an affirming word to your child every single day, at least one time, maybe two or three, and think specifically about what you would want to say to your child, and point out something good in them, point out something you appreciate about them, and make sure that they're listening that you've got, ideally have eye contact.

And if that's not an option, even texting them or writing out a little note, those are also powerful things. Although I think the verbal from for me would be my first choice of something I've encouraged you to do, as parents, you know, we might not have the power to change circumstances or fix broken relationships but we do have the power of our words, and helping our child with their thoughts and knowing how that we can keep and we can throw away the thoughts that are not helpful that are not edifying. So don't underestimate what God can do with your kind, encouraging healing words in the heart and mind of your child.

Meredith Brock: Wow, Lisa, thank you so much. I've taken a whole page of notes, all kinds of things to think about here, as I reflect on the three little human beings that I get to parent, that I'm lucky enough to be able to parent, and one of the things that you said early in your teaching that really stood out to me is I remember, I've heard the same thing like don't comment, like, don't comment on your children's appearance. Like it's going to make them self-conscious and think that you really value that. And as you were teaching your message, I was just reflecting on that and realizing there are so many parenting trends out there, right? There's so many out there. Don't do this. Do, it changes it monthly, if not weekly, as to what you are and aren't supposed to do. And the thing I love about the teaching you just gave is this is, this is bedrock. This is parenting your child's mind with a biblical, through biblical, scriptural teachings. That's never going to change. Like that's not a parenting trend. That is a lifelong skill that you're imparting to your child, teaching them how to take captive those negative thoughts and speak the truth over them from Scripture.

So, I have I have a hard question for you, Lisa. Are you ready?

LJ: Okay, okay.

MB: So, I had an incident this morning, that's what we'll call it. I'm taking my three kids to school. I'm actually, I have, my oldest is nine, I have a six-year-old and then I have a one-year-old, and our one-year-old, is very verbal. He's what you call a screecher. He screeches. So, it's very loud in the car while we're driving to school, because he, it's, whether he's happy or sad he screeches. Like it doesn't matter. And so, there is a situation going down with the other two children. Like it's happening, they're having a moment. And I overheard my oldest say something about himself that I was like, oh, you know, I need to stop that right now, you know. And so, I in the moment, I don't even know how I responded because it was just all chaos, right? When you have all three children talking at the same time, you're trying to like, not miss your turn, like all the things.

So, here's my question for you. As, as a mom of eight kids, you know, having a, just human beings in a room is overstimulating sometimes, having eight children in a room is over, and parenting them well is overstimulating. How have you in those moments when you felt like, it's just the chaos of parenting, right? And you overhear a child maybe say something about themselves or say something, a belief that they have? How do you handle it in those chaotic moments? Do you stop in the moment? Or do you

follow up afterwards? Like help, help me know, how do I navigate those moments practically, when it's just, it's the chaos of the car trying to get to school in the morning.

LJ: Oh, that's just reality, though. There's, there's no doubt about it, there's a lot of that in life isn't there. But I think I would correct it right in the moment, just say, hey, I don't want you talking like that, because that's not true. And, you know, after school today, let's take a moment and maybe make a cup of hot chocolate or something like that, go for a walk or sit on lawn, and I want to talk some more about that. So, it's worth following up on. But sometimes if you're, you know, you're in the rush, and everybody's in the car, it's not the ideal moment of really kind of getting to the bottom of it, which is what you want to do. And it might just be something that just popped out of his mouth, and we don't have that. And it, it might just be a simple correction. But if it's, if it's anything more than that, you just want to, you know, you want to get to the root of it. So, you want to know, hey, what's going on your head and make sure that you kind of catch those weeds before they really grow?

MB: That's good. How do you, how do you identify those moments, where you feel like maybe that's just something they just said, in the moment? Or this is, this is weightier, it's taken root in their hearts? How do you usually kind of decipher between those two kinds of thoughts, if you will?

LJ: Well, prayerfully probably, but also, I would say, you know, by looking in their eyes and really seeing is there pain behind it now, is there grief behind that statement? If I see any of that, that I'm thinking, okay, there's something more here. Or if they're just being goofy, then I'm like, okay, you know, what, you probably overheard somebody else saying that, or maybe you saw it on a TV show or something, and I just want you to know, we don't talk like that in our home. Because I'm establishing culture in my home. So, I think probably those two things or if it's becomes a repeat pattern, so the first time I've got, you know, our youngest son is a bit of the, he's the funny guy, right? The classic youngest kid. So, he'll say sup, and it's kind of funny, maybe a little bit self-deprecating. And I'm like, okay, like, you know, but then if I hear it two or three times, I'm like, okay, son, we're going to talk because, actually, I know, you kind of think you're being funny, but I don't think it is funny. And I'm concerned that there's a little bit of truth behind it. So, let's talk about that.

MB: That's a great differentiating way to look at that. Lisa, thank you so much. Again, thank you so much for being on the show today. I just, I can't help but pause and say, there is a big difference between parenting our kids' behaviors, which is important. We want to teach our kids good life skills and things like that, but then there is just such a huge difference in parenting your child's mind. And I think you've really shared some powerful practical things to do. I want to remind all of our listeners today that Lisa does have some resources that you can get your hands on, that maybe you are struggling with coming up with affirming things to say to your kids, and that's just like a practical resource that we need. Please make sure you pick up both of her books. They are brand new, out now, *100 Words of Affirmation Your Son Needs to Hear* and *100 Words of Affirmation Your Daughter Needs to Hear*. They are available for purchase today. We've linked them in our show notes at P31bookstore.com.

KO: So good. Well, one thing that popped up in my mind, in my mind that I want to point our listeners to that's not here and our scripts that we've practiced before, but Lisa, one thing that you mentioned was kind of the thoughts that your kids have, and you address, like where does this come from? And in my mind, something that popped in my head was a recent *Therapy & Theology* episode that we recorded with our president Lysa TerKeurst and her counselor and our resident theologian on shame scripts. And so, this episode, I feel like is so helpful for parents to really be able to address the thoughts we think, but I think that shame scripts episode on *Therapy & Theology* would be so good to go back to and like unpack even more like that, especially if you're in the rut of kind of addressing that with your kids. Right? Yeah. need all the resources we can get our hands on? What we also want to point out our encouragement for today devotions, and they're a great resource for anyone Lisa has written a devotion for us before. We've got lots of different kinds of devotions for moms in the trenches, but also just whatever your heart needs. It's a great five to seven minute read in the morning. We send them out every single weekday in your email inbox and you can subscribe for free today at Proverbs31.org.

MB: And lastly, we absolutely love it when we hear you guys on the show. hear from you guys, about the show, and we want to know if an episode has been helpful for you or is resonating, is making some kind of difference in your life. So, if you would please, please leave us a review on Apple podcast if you are willing and if you haven't, make sure subscribe to the show today.

KO: Alright, that's all friends. Thank you so much for joining us today and tuning into the show. at Proverbs 31 Ministries we believe that when you know the truth and live the truth, it changes everything.