

BCL 329 3 Family Habits that will Strengthen Bonds in 5 Minutes with Jim Mhoon

What are the daily best practices of successful families? Our intentional and unintentional habits and rituals form our family culture. Little things like how do we say goodbye at the start of the day, or how do we manage our free time? What we do with each of these decisions matters greatly. So join us for this helpful conversation and be encouraged with so many of these simple yet critical habits and rituals that benefit our home and school life.

All this and more on this episode of Base Camp Live. Mountains, we all face them as we seek to influence the next generation. Get equipped to conquer the challenges, summit the peak and shape exceptionally thoughtful, compassionate and flourishing human beings.

We call it ancient future education for raising the next generation. Welcome to Base Camp Live. Now your host, Davies Owens.

Welcome to another episode of Base Camp Live. Here with your host, Davies Owens. That would be me here with you on this journey of raising the next generation to what can feel like the top of Mount Everest.

I do hope that these podcasts are encouraging to you. It is always a big decision I know you have to make. Are you going to hit play when there are so many other things to listen to? Especially when this is a little bit of a longer form podcast.

And I know in the Zipcast world, I'm always talking about the importance of encouraging each other on the go when we're moving fast and have limited time. So I appreciate these moments to go a little bit deeper. And hopefully this is maybe you're stuck in traffic, maybe you're folding laundry, wherever you may be.

I'm glad that we are on the journey together as we raise the next generation. Always grateful for chances just to connect with you. I'm excited about this summer.

The summer always means summer conferences. I'm going to be at ACCS and SCL. If you're there, please stop by our booth.

We'll have our Base Camp Live paraphernalia up, but also Zipcast. You're going to see that hummingbird all over the place. Just either the Base Camp Live logo or the Zipcast logo will lead you to us.

And we will be there and love to connect with you face to face. It's always a joy to be together. And if you're not there, it's always good to hear from you.

Info at BaseCampLive.com. Special shout out in this episode to the folks at Christian Heritage Classical School in Longview, Texas. Stephanie Jones has had a school and her team there. A big

shout out.

Thanks for listening. For being a part of Base Camp Live each week and Zipcast, as well as to the team at Artesia Classical Academy in Artesia, New Mexico. Tammy Anderson, thank you for listening and for being a part of this great community that we're in as parents and educators raising the next generation.

We are always appreciative for those who are on the journey with us. I'm really excited to have Jim Moon join us again. It's been a number of years.

Jim is a great friend who has a fascinating career in terms of when it comes to parenting and raising the next generation. He's a family counselor, but he was a former VP of content development at Focus on the Family. He's worked in the world of media and publishing for many years and books and magazines and membership programs.

I guess the highlight he looks back on from Focus on the Family was the club version of the popular Adventures in Odyssey series. And if you're an older parent like me, you remember, I think Adventures in Odyssey is still out there. It was always a highlight for so many students or young people to listen to that.

Jim has been involved in a variety of organizations from Christian ministries and medical teams, internationals, crew, Operation Christmas Child, Compassion International. And he is by day working in the very important area of marriage and family therapy where he's in private practice. He has a Master of Science in that area of marriage and family therapy.

So he has a great bird's eye view of what families deal with all of the time and what are some of the rituals and habits that we need to pay attention to. So we're going to jump into this interview before we do just a quick shout out and thank you to those who've sponsored and partnered with us for this particular episode. Classical Academic Press, Life Architects Coaching, Classic Learning Test, and Wilson Hill Academy.

All of these are great organizations. I encourage you to learn more. You can check out more of their great resources on the Basecamp Life Partner page or go directly to their website.

Without further ado, here's my conversation with Jim Moon. Jim Moon, welcome back to Basecamp Life. Davies, it's always a pleasure.

Thanks for having me. It's good to be with you. It's good to reconnect.

It's been a while. For folks who go to their website and type in Jim Moon, you can find earlier discussions. It's been a couple of years.

Yeah. Yeah. It's a shame that we get so busy with our own lives that you and I don't connect more often as friends either, but.

Well, I'll just have to schedule an appointment as a client to come in. That's not a bad idea.

There's a good way to see your friends.

Well, for folks that haven't heard you before, Jim, tell a little bit of your story. You had a great career with Focus on the Family and now you're working with Clarence and yeah. Yeah.

I like to believe that the mantle that brushed Dr. Dobson, that God put on Dr. Dobson's shoulders, brushed my shoulders as well in terms of being a family advocate because I went to work for Focus on the Family back in 1988. Right. When it was.

And so a total of 20 years working for them, working my way up through the ranks and eventually wound up as the VP of their content development integration programs. But it was all about building resources for families. Yeah.

Young families and we, you know, ages and stages and all that stuff. And it's always been a passion of mine. Yeah.

You know, I'm the second oldest of eight kids. I've got 31 nephews and nieces. The term for that is nibblings.

Did you know that? I did not know that. 31 nibblings and now grand nibblings, I guess. Are they great nibblings or grand nibblings? My nephews and nieces are having kids.

You're a blessed man. There is nibblings in your quiver there. Yeah.

And so I love family and eventually migrated to becoming a counselor. And that's what I do now. Probably half my client base would be married couples looking for help.

And the other half are men, which would include teenagers. I call a 14 year old a young man and I counsel them. And most of them are dealing with the relational issues.

So I guess I'm a relationship counselor. And God just put that in my heart. Well, it's your vantage point of decades.

I'm sure you can see broad trends or shifts and changes that are happening in families. I often say to a lot of our listeners, I mean, in fact, probably the name James Dobson is not a household term like it would have been 10, 15 years ago. And so many young families are thinking, where are those universal, if you will, kind of clarion voices if you're coming along.

My parents divorced when I was a young dad. I was like, well, let me go grab the James Dobson books or let me get the VHS tape out. Yeah.

Who do you turn to now? Who do you turn to now? And as I talk to families around the country, often what you hear is, well, I don't really, first of all, I don't really want to parent the way I was parented. And then you look at the Pew stats that say, well, only about 30% of millennial Gen Zers even live within a hundred mile radius of extended family. So there's just, I think a real need for who do I go to for guidance, especially as I'm trying to raise kids in this crazy world.

Well, yeah. How many people don't have a mentor they can turn to or a community that they're part of? And it can be hard. Well, and two, we've moved so much to virtual.

I saw an article recently as it relates to virtual relationships. And you would expect that because we don't have so much face-to-face or actual like close friends that we would be lonelier. But the data suggests that a lot of people aren't actually lonelier.

Interesting. Because they have even more social interaction with each other. But it's not as, to me, my concern is it's not as depth.

Well, and the quality of the guidance, when I often ask, when I do focus groups, when I'm speaking at schools around the country, I'll say, how do you know how to parent? And the default answer, overarching answer is I will either phone a friend or call somebody who's sort of a little bit ahead of me. That's fine. Or I go to the internet and then you end up with sort of... I watch TikTok videos.

And all of a sudden you see the rise. We've done a whole podcast on gentle parenting. I mean, these sort of big trends.

So what do you see if you could just broad brushstroke? Are there a couple of things you're like, boy, these are some definite trends of change in terms of young families today, issues that maybe they're... Do you talk about family formation or what's happening actually in families? Well, probably, well, however you want to answer it. Well, yeah. So maybe this is just a factor of awareness.

But in terms of family formation, one of the things that's occurred is that young men in our culture have been taught that they shouldn't be patriarchal, which means in which they've interpreted to mean that they can't take a leadership role in a relationship. It's supposed to be completely egalitarian. So they don't take a leadership role.

And in many cases, they check out of the responsibility of actually initiating, even dating, but for that matter, initiating progress in family and marriage and family formation because they're waiting for the woman to be their egalitarian. Well, in many cases, neither one of them are leading. And so they move in together and they sort of in a, I think somebody, what did they, what's the term they use? A situationship.

All kinds of interesting words here. Instead of a relationship, you know, because nobody's actually like driving and pushing it forward because nobody feels as though they can. And so our culture has kind of cheated people out of the idea that somebody needs to initiate and it's okay to initiate when it's good.

And you don't have to be an ogre about it. In fact, don't be an ogre about it. If you're going to relate to a daughter of God, treat her like a daughter of God.

If you are a daughter of God, act like it and move forward that way. And then many of them

bring that into the relationship when they do get married. There's always this question about, does anybody actually have the temerity to lead? And what does leadership look like in our culture, but also as a Christian couple? And there's lots of confusing ideas about complementarity.

We may need to do a 10-part series to get through all of this. But I think today is really just kind of an overarching word. Rituals that are maybe needing to be spotlighted, to be emphasized.

So many families today did not grow up near healthy role models to the point we're just making. Or we live in a world today where even marriage is sort of thought upon as, you know, old fashion or irrelevant. Having kids is kind of weird.

What's the point? So there's just so much, the broad narrative leaves you very confused today. So let's just jump into that. What are some, if you could just pinpoint, you see people every day, you have a perspective of, boy, if somebody could have just gotten a little bit ahead of your maturity and spoken into your life and given you some best practices, what would have been some things that would have made it to that list? The first thing that comes to mind for me is that the best thing a couple can do for their children is to ensure that they have a solid relationship.

And by that, we mean that what we seek, and it's an outcome, it's not something you can go to directly, it's an outcome of others, is you would want a loving, intimate partnership. And you're not going to get the route to a loving, intimate partnership would be open, vulnerable interaction. You're not going to be open and vulnerable with another person unless you feel safe.

So the first thing would be safety first. And that means you've got to have enough interaction with each other that is safe, that you can afford to move forward in something that maybe is a little bit riskier. If you thought about your safety meter, depending on your family of origin and prior experience, your safety meter, you know, ideally, you could feel 100% confident in me, trust me, but a lot of us have been dinged around by the blows of fate.

Yeah. And our meter only goes up to maybe six. So the relationship with our spouse, which I'm sure most families could chart, you know, early days, dating, you know, marriage, honeymoon, oh, wait, job starts, oh, wait, kids come, net, net, these are roommates that live together with a bunch of kids running around.

Well, I would say this, that if you want a loving, intimate partnership, you're not going to get that unless you're good roommates. So a lot of people despair, oh, we're just roommates. Actually, being good roommates is a really good thing.

You can even get that far. Yeah, be good roommates, because if you're not, then you're just setting up lots of contention. Same thing with friendship.

In fact, that would be one of the things I'd say, if you're going to invest in anything, be sure

you're good friends with your spouse. And so you think about, well, how do we develop friendships? Well, one thing is that, you know, like when you pulled up here to the parking lot today, what was the first thing we did? Well, you were out there to begin with. Right, and I waved at you and greeted you like, hey, there's Davies.

Yeah, cool. That's great. You know, and that's what we ought to be doing.

If we saw each other every day, we might become very complacent about greeting one another. Yeah, that's right. And saying goodbye to one another.

And I'm surprised how many couples, when I ask them the question, how do you part ways in the morning? I mean, fewer of them actually do part ways. The interesting thing is those natural inflection points of our life actually are rarer and rarer now where they don't actually part ways. So they never say goodbye, but they sort of go their separate ways anyway.

It never occurs to them to say, see you later, hon. Right. But the way you say goodbye to your partner matters.

And these are really rituals. I mean, you don't say that. They are rituals.

Yeah, these would be daily rituals. In fact, if you read Dr. John Gottman's book, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, this is one of the rituals. He says, be sure that you give a good goodbye when you part ways and a memorable hello when you come back together, because you're always, you cannot not communicate.

So what are you communicating when you just wander off to work and don't say goodbye to your wife? It reminds me of a story, a friend of mine who is involved in campus ministry. One of the things that he and his wife often will have college students over for dinner. And a few years back, he realized that just sort of as you're talking about rituals, he would often get there a little after his wife because he'd been in a meeting and he'd walk in and kiss his wife.

And the comments from so many students were like, I've never seen married couples do this before. Like, that's weird because my parents, you know, just... And it should be the opposite of that. It should be the opposite.

Yeah. That should be the standard is that you give each other some sort of a parting blessing. Mm-hmm.

By the way, it's actually true that it might be the last time you give a parting blessing. It's hard to remain vigilant like that, but it could literally be the case. But it communicates something when you go and find your partner and you give them a blessing before you leave.

Right. And same thing when you trip past the dog and wiggle your way past the kids and you get over there and you find your bride and you give her a kiss. Yeah.

That speaks a volume, not just to her, but everybody else that's watching that. And that is a

ritual and it matters. Well, and to your point that you... Back to tripping over the dog.

I mean, I think often, again, in this upside down world, kids become the center of everything. And so it's like after 20 minutes of chatting with the kids, you might make your way and find your spouse. Right, right.

You're suggesting go find your spouse. Yeah, go find... Well, I mean, you don't want to elbow the kids out of the way, but you might have to drag them if they're holding onto your legs, you know, drag them in there, but find your spouse and greet them because that's your primary person. And your kids are observing how you treat one another too.

And ideally, if I go and I find my spouse, I'm welcomed by her as well. And she's not distracted doing whatever. Right, right.

So that's two people saying, we say goodbye to one another in a way that's meaningful. And we say hello to one another and we do it every time because the absence of that over time sends a message. And so I see a lot of couples.

And when I ask them about what their daily rituals are in that regard, so many of them are like, we don't have any daily rituals. And many, many of them, once we give them that idea of saying goodbye and hello to one another, they try that and they get amazing traction out of that because of the statement that's being made. Wow.

Not to mention the kiss. Right. Well, and without that, you're left with what fills the gap.

It's not nothingness. It's probably, oh, let's see. The last thing I heard was a directive, a criticism.

I don't forget this like you did last time, comment. Or some sort of a complaint or whatever, you know, about the kids are driving me crazy. But when do we actually connect with each other? And that's meaningful.

Well, what I love about what you're saying is that, I think everybody's looking for the latest tip or hack or best secret. This is not complicated. This is pretty.

This is pretty. Shockingly simple. Pretty simple.

But you better think about it because if you don't, you're going to drift. You know, that's the law of entropy kicks in. And then, no, that's true.

Yeah. Yeah. Next thing you know, it's like, no, what was your name? Yeah.

Yeah. Well, in fact, I correlate it to, you know, you think about, I mean, we've both got kids. So you've got to say you have a two-year-old in the house and you're sitting in the living room reading and all of a sudden your two-year-old comes trundling around the corner.

What do you do? Yeah. Well, you kind of have to pay attention. Well, you'd go, Hey, there you are.

Right. You brighten up. And they're sending a signal that the little two-year-old is getting this idea that you like them and you want them.

Right. Right. Well, our partner comes around the corner and we ignore them.

Yeah. Now you're, Hey, could you get that for me? Right. Yeah.

Waste stuff is coming back. And so what we got to do is maybe brighten up when our bride walks around the corner. That's a great point.

And maybe she'll brighten up when we do. Right. And to your point, like you just eventually start taking each other for granted.

And then all of a sudden, you know, and then, then why would you want to go on a date night and spend a whole time? Well, because again, the sentiment we have towards one another is an outcome of other things. So if you can't bother greeting me when I come into the room, saying good morning to me, say goodbye when you leave or agree when you come home, where's the energy for my sentiment of feeling wanted. Right.

I want to feel wanted by my wife. And same thing for her. It's the whole love and respect idea, right? Right.

Well, and the other thing is I can complain about her not greeting me, but the question always comes back to what am I doing? So if the ritual is important, I should, I should perform the ritual, whether she does or not. That's me taking responsibility of my actions. That's great, Jim.

Why don't we take a quick break and we'll come back. We've got quite a number of these rituals that, um, that again, the good news is even if you've not done them, you can start doing them pretty easily. These are not complicated.

Yeah, exactly. Say goodbye and say hello. I think I can do that.

Okay, good. You're off to a good, healthy marriage. So, all right, we'll be right back after the break.

I want to take just a moment during our break and let you know about the great work that's being done by Wilson Hill Academy. They offer a vibrant, rich, and accredited classical Christian education available to families and schools almost anywhere. With a click of a button, students join master teachers and friends live online from all over the world to engage in deep and lively discussions, solve math problems, conduct science experiments, translate Latin, deliver thesis presentations, and so much more.

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beyond. Discover what's possible for your family or school at wilsonhillacademy.com slash Basecamp. Hey, Basecamp Live listeners.

A recent Pew Research study revealed that only 30% of millennial and Gen Z parents live within a 100-mile radius of extended family. That means that many families are missing the wisdom and support of older generations, and more than ever, we need strong, consistent school communities to walk next to us providing rich connection and helpful weekly tips. That is exactly why I created Zipcast.

Zipcast gives schools a proven platform to communicate more personally and effectively with their parent community. Imagine as a parent receiving a short weekly audio message from your school leadership, not just announcements, but real insights into what's on their hearts and minds paired with practical wisdom from national parenting and educational experts like Keith McCurdy and Justin Early, along with experts on classical Christian education. We even include short testimonials and parenting tips from fellow parents all around the country.

You can listen anywhere and at any time. And now with Zipcast 2.0, schools can customize their messages even more, offering a truly personal and engaging way to build connection and shared vision. If you're a school leader not yet using Zipcast, I want to encourage you to consider it for the 25-26 school year.

And if you're a parent at a school that is not yet using Zipcast, take a moment and encourage your leadership to explore it. It's easy to use, affordable, and effective. And in today's fast-paced world, Zipcast is a proven tool used by over 60 schools this past school year to deliver encouragement, insights, and connections in just 10 minutes a week.

We like to say it's about encouraging you on the go with what you need to know. Check it all out at zipcast.media to hold your spot as we have limited spaces available for the upcoming school year. So Jim, I love the fact that the most complicated thing I've heard so far is just remembering to say, you know, to greet our spouses in the mornings and when we depart and just, that's easy.

I think we can do that. Yeah, yeah. And not— Say goodbye and say hello in a gracious way.

And what are the, you know, it'd be interesting if somebody kind of transcribed everything that came out of your mouth in the day. Like, what are you saying? And who are you saying it to? Oh, like the kids got 90% of my conversation and 10% to my spouse. And so just being cognizant of that.

So, all right. Well, I'm sorry. And a little bunny trail there.

Yeah, go ahead. Just going back to John Gottman. Yeah.

He says it should be a five to one ratio, positive to negative. Boy, that's— So if you said a negative thing and then you said a positive thing, you think you're a par? No, you're four over

par. I thought it was like nine.

You have some ketchup. I heard it was a nine to one. I mean, I can't— But the point is, there should be a whole lot more good input than bad input.

That's what you think about. And is neutral good or bad? Well, it kind of is in the eye of the beholder. Yeah.

And then we get into the whole, you know, men versus women. I mean, I feel disrespected because every time it comes out of your mouth is a criticism or a thing. Right.

And then obviously, yeah, you get a lot of withdrawals and deposits. You got to make the deposits. That's a whole other podcast.

That'll be part 12 in the series. But all right. So staying, keeping it simple for this one.

So what are some other rituals you think would be really helpful? I've become a real big fan of a family prayer. Okay. And the thing about that is keep it simple enough that everybody doesn't just groan, oh, we got to do this.

This is going to be a big ordeal. You know, like we're going to have a prayer meeting for an hour. No, no, no.

Right. The idea is to have something that you're going to say with your family in front of your family and that you're going to do it consistently that sends a message to God, because we're actually praying to God. Yeah.

But we're praying to God in front of our family. And we've got some common themes in the prayer. And I grew up in the community, the church community I grew up in.

I got the sense that if it wasn't extemporaneous and off the top of my head, that it wasn't authentic. And I lived under that for a long, long time. And then one day somebody from a more, you know... Liturgical church.

Liturgical church gave me... The catechism. Well, the cate... Yeah. Somebody gave me Luther's small catechism.

I'm like, well, that's good stuff. Somebody wrote some good stuff down. But they gave me a prayer book.

Okay. And I opened that up and I read one of the... Just one prayer. And I went, wait a minute.

That's a beautiful prayer. You mean somebody thought about what it is they wanted to say to God and they edited it and they honed it and they made it this nice, tight presentation to God about what it is that they would like to say to Him in a given scenario. I'm like, there's some real beauty in that.

And there's some real ritual in that, because what are the common themes that you would like to present to your family on a daily basis that would take you maybe a minute? Because you can put a lot in a minute. I love the priestly benediction. How long does it take to say, may the Lord bless you and keep you, may His face shine upon you.

I'm missing one of the phrases. Be gracious, He'll give you peace. That's pretty quick, right? So crafting a prayer like that also makes it easy because you don't have to wonder what it is you're going to say.

You already know what you're going to say. And it's complete in terms of, there's a component of that in which you thank God for His provision and love. You ask for His grace to help foster peace and trust in your home, to glorify Him in your words and actions, to love each other fervently and be really ready and willing to support one another, forgive one another when things go well, to use temperate words.

And then there's an opportunity to bless each of the people there in your circle. And then you can expand out there and maybe say a word of blessing and supplication to the Lord about your extended family and friends. And you can do that.

It doesn't take much. Moments. That's right.

And you huddle up, you put your arms around one another, you come in that tight huddle and you say that prayer. And it goes, really, that's a ritual that we've been using in our family. Then I'm like, I look forward to that.

And the other part is everybody participates in calling it. Yeah. So if I'm feeling lazy one night, my wife doesn't let me.

She's like, no, no, come on, we have to pray. It's such a, it's so, again, the beauty of this is it's simple. And it can, I've seen families that just build it into their, you know, a meal together, which we'll talk about.

But I think, you know, why not at the end of the meal, have a short prayer? You could do it right then and there. Right then and there. Or you could do, or the idea of early on, I had a pastor when I was a young dad say, you just need to go in and bless your kids every night.

So the idea of a blessing over your child is a form of a prayer. Yeah. And you could use the blessing to do that.

It's already written for you. You don't have to make that up either. Yeah.

And so that's easy. But placing something like that in a natural inflection point in your family's evening is an important thing. So if you have an evening meal together, you could say that prayer at the end or beginning of the meal.

Hopefully you're also blessing. There's the blessing of the food and that, you know, that

tradition. Yeah.

Showing gratitude to God. But the other would be, I had a friend years ago, their ritual was whoever was going to bed first was the person responsible to call the family together. Well, it makes sense.

I'm going to bed, so we need to pray. And so everybody would gather together. Make sure nobody gets left out.

Right. And so that would be another natural inflection point. We don't usually forget to go to bed.

Probably not. It also seems, I mean, there's so many things that are, I guess, built into this that we don't, maybe don't consciously think about, but just what does it do in terms of the positioning of authority in our home specifically as it relates to our orientation to God? Because as a parent, it's very easy for our child to, when do they actually see us living our faith out? Right. Yeah.

And now there's a posturing of, okay, it's not all about the parent or our issues. Like we're going to really make time, make space for God, basically. Yeah.

And you have, and you share some of that responsibility for that because sometimes you're the person that's going to call the family together. Right. Right.

So you're giving them a little bit of ownership of that. That's really good. In fact, if you think about it, if your kids are old enough, if you're going to craft a family prayer, that's what I like the idea of writing a family prayer, whether you keep it exactly on script or not, but you could craft a family prayer.

What are our themes? I wonder what the kids would add as themes. Now it's their prayer too. That's my understanding.

Well, it's the old, what is it? The old LifeWay bookstore magnet for the refrigerator. The parent families that pray together, stay together. Yeah.

That might be an old cliché. Just because it's an old cliché doesn't mean it's not true. I know, but people, well, and I think you're right.

I think it was a sort of sense of just, it can't be that simple. It can't be that simple, but you want it. Well, and yeah, try it without it.

Right. Well, a lot of people do. So in some ways it kind of is that simple because when we ask the question, do you pray together? And the answer is no.

Do you say goodbye and hello to one another? No. Yeah. Oh, I wonder what happened if you started doing that? Yeah.

And when you were getting ready to go into, do you have dinner together? Yeah. And so many families there, they're on the run and they never actually sit down and have dinner the old fashioned way around a table. So that would be another ritual.

Absolute ritual. Yes. In fact, there's data around that.

Yeah. Well, and I was going to ask, because that's part of, I mean, you're, you have such, again, a bird's eye view into so many families and so many issues that are probably downstream of like, okay, wait, you don't pray together. You don't say goodbye.

You don't eat meals together. And yet you wonder why you're not connected. I mean, it seems like... Right.

Well, yeah. So there's some of the, and I don't know what it is about a meal, but there's something about breaking bread together that is in fact special. That's very, I mean, I think there's something special.

You just have meals all the time. Yeah. 5,000.

But sitting down and actually having dinner with people, there's some spiritual magic, so to speak, in that. And what we do is we're just sort of scrambling around and skipping over that. Because we think it's just about taking in sustenance.

And so I wonder what would happen if people took some time to make sure that that occurred on a frequent basis in their home. Maybe you can't do it every night, but often you can. It's interesting that maybe a day you'll be here in our crazy tech world where you can pop the space capsule and you've got the nutrients your body needs.

So now the question would you actually still have a meal together for other reasons? Well, yeah. Or what's the version of a meal? And so are there other things you could do that would take the place of a meal? I don't know. There's something about taking nutrition in together that I wonder about.

Well, here's a corollary. OK. Like as a counselor, I provide remote counseling.

So we do telehealth for many clients. Especially here in Idaho. I've got clients all over the state and they can't afford to drive in.

That's pretty good. It's not bad. But it's not the same as having somebody in the room.

Because I think there's... I'm going to sound very mystic here. But there's spiritual energy when you sit in the room with another person. Yeah.

Well, we're embodied beings. We are. And we're fully integrated in that regard.

So being together in a space with some sort of an intent that's nourishing your soul, your body,

that matters. It might be why huddling up for a family prayer and touching one another while you pray. There's power in that.

And oh, and we're also praying. Well, this is going to... I know there's probably all kinds of reasons for this. But I think about just for years, not even being a parent, but it's doing youth ministry way back in the day.

And oftentimes it was over the meals that things would slow down enough, especially with the adolescent boys sitting there. Girls always seem like they want to talk more. But the boys would actually start opening up while you've... Maybe it's because everybody has to chew and slow down a little bit.

Who knows? Actually, you can actually have a conversation. I don't know what the magic is, but it's different. But you're forced to kind of sit together.

And you're not just staring at each other. You're doing something. And then through that, conversations begin to unflow.

Well, hopefully we are. I mean, if you're going to take advantage of the mealtime, there would be more than just chowing down. Right.

Well, it's your point. It's not just... But I think a lot of families are like, oh, I ordered a pizza. Everybody grab a piece.

And then they grab the pizza. And they all go out and somebody goes to the back porch, somebody else goes up to the room. But like setting a table.

I mean, there's ritual. My sister teaches at a classical Christian school in Atlanta. And she said, after COVID, it's been so frustrating because this is fourth grade.

She says so often these young children physically cannot stay seated for 50 minutes in a class period. And it's a direct derivative of because in their home, so rarely do the parents expect them either. Either they do have a meal together, and they do the bohemian parenting where everybody kind of floats through the kitchen.

And or do you actually have them sit? Where do table manners come in? Where does the art of conversation happen? So there's all these, I call them derivatives that you really are losing out on. If they can't sit for one minute, they're not going to sit for five minutes. No, and good luck at school the next day.

Yeah, right. Exactly. Just that sense of focus and discipline.

All right, so that's another, again, not incredibly difficult. And you don't have to do a completely home-cooked meal to have a meal together. You could, that's a bonus, I guess, but you could just.

Yeah, we had happy teriyaki last night. Extra veggies. That's a whole nother podcast eating well together, eating together and eating well together.

But so prayers together, rituals together, the ritual of meals together seems really important. Let's take another break because I want to, again, we're trying to, this is going to be a very concentrated, just best practices. All of these are worthy of a much longer conversation, but I want to hear some other things that you've observed.

So we'll be right back with Jim Moon. One of the most frequent questions I hear from parents as I travel around the country is, at what age should I give my child a phone? I get the question. It's very practical and very important to be able to communicate with our children.

And I think sometimes we think of it as an all or none. I won't give them any phone or I'll give them a fully functioning, internet ready smartphone. You know, there's a great solution that I'm a big fan of.

It's the Light Phone, L-I-G-H-T, Light Phone. It's built by folks that want to help us find some sanity and the need for communication, which is very practical. The phone is very basic.

It allows you to make phone calls, to do two-way texting. It does allow podcast and allow some map features. But really other than that, what else do you need for communication? So it's a perfect tool for adults and children alike who just want to simplify and not have all the temptations of the full internet.

Check out the Light Phone on our partners page. And I know that it will be a blessing to your family as it has been to mine. Graduating can be intimidating.

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Well, Jim, we need probably 10 rituals here, but we're all busy today. And to the point at hand, what are some other really practical things that modern families would do really well to pay attention to? Well, think about the number one obstacle to what we've already talked about. And that is how do we say goodbye and hello to one another, whether we ever sit down and have a meal together, whether we pray together, it's usually because everybody's scrambling.

Welcome to the modern world. Right? And so in this case, it's not so much what it is you are doing as so much as it is what you aren't doing. So, you know, modern parents, there are lots of opportunities for our kids to get involved in really good stuff.

Play soccer, they can do taekwondo, they can do youth group. There's lots of stuff that they can do. And it's good.

But the problem is, in many cases, we overload it and we're busy full time all the time. And there's never any time to stop and pause and take in or to relate to one another because we're hustling, hustling, hustling. So where does, I mean, your counsel, you see often, I think, when the train jumps the tracks because it's just completely overloaded.

But what do you think's behind that? What drives us as humans to overload ourselves? Well, one is this sense that we're, is, you know, the pleasers in the world feel as though they've got to be performing all the time. And any sort of gap in their schedule feels like downtime, doesn't feel productive. And so we need to feel it up.

And if we don't, then we're failing in some way or feeling guilty that my children aren't getting all the opportunities that are afforded to what we see or think other people are doing. And so we keep driving. And then also there is the whole performance culture that we're up against.

You know, if you've ever been involved in club sports, for example, it's very competitive. It's very competitive at a very early age. And if you don't keep up, you're not gonna keep up.

So if you have any aspirations of playing varsity ball later, you better be on the club team today. And that means you gotta show up for practices and you gotta be engaged in games. I mean, there's softball tournaments.

How much time does that take from a family? It can be huge. No, it's a whole industry that didn't exist 20 years ago. I mean, it used to be, if you wanted to play soccer, you'd find other kids in your community that could play soccer.

Or you didn't have to get on a plane to fly somewhere to play soccer. Or you just play on your high school team and you can show up as a freshman and learn how to play soccer. Right, but everything is- It's not like that anymore.

But it's hard when you don't, when you've never seen it any other way. And to your point, when you rightfully wanna be a good parent, you wanna give them an opportunity. If they have inclinations towards athletics, you don't wanna deny them that opportunity.

And I guess there are certainly, people don't get to the Olympics without trying a little bit. There's that whole argument. No, I mean, that's absolutely true.

But not every kid's going to the Olympics. Right, right, well, a lot of people spend a lot of investment in athletics, hoping their child would get a scholarship. And what they wind up doing is spending years in athletics, which hopefully is good for their character development and all that stuff.

But they don't actually make it to that level. And the percentages are so low. Percentages are very, very low.

I guess the kind of the devil in the room is just that sense of, or what the call to action would be,

really having to look deep within is, am I doing this out of fear of failing my child or keeping up with the Joneses because their kids are doing five things? Am I moving towards something that's good and important to me and affirming my values? Or am I running away from something I'm afraid of? It makes a world of difference. Why am I doing that? Especially if you've got kids who really don't want to participate and the parents are demanding it. Well, to what extent are you coaching them to step into something in a good way? And to what extent are you forcing them to do something that's your dream? We kind of want to know what that is.

And it's hard. That takes some self-reflection. You know, why am I advocating this? I mean, I've always been curious about this.

I mean, as a counselor, do you see, we're complicated beings. There's lots of things that motivate us simultaneously. But I would think for a lot of folks, that sense of, well, it didn't happen for me.

Now I've got another chance with my children. So whatever that thing is that didn't happen, trying to push them. That would be something.

Sure, I'm going to push them because I didn't get that. The other would be prestige. It feels pretty good to have a kid that's, you know, a super athlete.

Triple, whatever, accolade thing, thing, thing. So, you know, and so we might pursue that and perhaps even over-pursue it. And then argue that we're doing this for very notable reasons, but at the same time.

Yeah, this is interesting. When I read this, this was recently, the concept was self-betrayal. Okay.

And self-betrayal would be when you operate in a way in which you don't do something, you avoid doing something that you know is right. Or you do something that isn't right. Puts you in the trap of having to rationalize why you did or didn't do that thing.

And that's a cognitive distortion trap because now you're fooling yourself and saying, I did this for noble reasons. When in fact, they weren't noble reasons. You were just avoiding and, or trying to gain something out of it.

Yeah. And now you've betrayed yourself. And somewhere along the way, you got to reintegrate that and realize, wait, I need to be speaking with integrity and truth.

Yeah. But you've bought into this sort of- I've rationalized myself into the trap, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

So, we're talking about overload and this, yeah, I don't think we could go very far without obviously talking about the technology problems of today in terms of the overload of, you know, somebody says, everybody says they're busy, but if they look, you look at the number of times the average American picks up their phone or they're pulled into this addictive dopamine

firing drug. I mean, is that not a big part of what makes the overload? It's just we're- I don't have time for anything, but if you look at my daily, you know, my digital habit per day, I spent four hours on my iPhone. Exactly.

We're all busy in the sense of- And again, we rationalize it. Again, that would be another place of us going into self-betrayal. I know that's a waste of time.

And my kids shouldn't do it, but I'm going to do it. Oh, and here I am wasting my time. Right.

Yeah. And it's literally, I mean, it's addictive. I mean, this is not a- It's totally designed to be addictive.

Right. But again, the delusion that this is like, well, I'm checking, you know, my kid's schedule or I'm preparing, I need to be up on the news or, you know- I need to be up to, that's a good one. I need to be up on the news.

I think it was John Eldredge, I heard him say the other day that we were not designed to be omniscient. And yet we live in a world in a way we kind of are. We hear about every tragedy that happens around the globe as soon as it happens.

And we have access to that all the time. It's Neil Postman's amusing ourselves to death. I mean, he made that point years ago.

Yeah, or informing ourselves to death. Well, right, right. Now I know about every, you know, I know about the FSU.

There was a shooting yesterday, I think. And we all know about it an hour after it happened. So your cognitive space, there's no, you know, the idea of biblically of kind of skole or rest or Sabbath.

There's no downtime. Everything is addictive and intrusive. Well, going back to John, who's an old friend of mine, is that he's like, well, we're actually disciplined by the internet.

Yeah. And one of the big lessons that we're learning and that's probably not good for us is you don't have to wait for anything. Right.

So don't slow down and wait for an answer. Don't sit down at dinner with your family and not do anything but interact with them because we're supposed to be on it going right now. Yeah.

Or we're failing. Yeah. Or we're failing.

Yeah. Fly or fail. So then what's the, okay, so if overload is a problem, what's the ritual then that would be? What's the opposite of overload? What's the correct? Well, well, maybe the ritual are the things that we're talking about is carve space out.

And you see, if you don't preserve these things, so like, you know, one of my recommendations

for couples, we didn't talk about this earlier, but date nights, having some time when you spend time together, that's meant to be enjoyable for the two. So date nights aren't meant to solve problems there, but go and enjoy one another. If you don't schedule that as a standard, the tyrant of urgency will steal it from you every time.

So most of my recommendation is pick a night and make that your night. Guard it. Carefully because it'll get robbed and it'll still get stolen.

Even if you're guarding it carefully, it's gonna happen. Well, that would be similar to the other rituals we're talking about. If you say, oh, we're gonna start having family dinners, but you don't guard it jealously with sharp elbows.

Right. It's not gonna happen. So that's the opposite of just sort of, you know, overloading your life with all this stuff.

Yeah. Because what happens is soccer takes priority over everything else if your kids, because they gotta be there at practice and they've gotta be there for the game. And wow, that's like locked down.

Yeah. Well, what else is locked down in your life that we were saying, you know, I'm not willing to compromise for this. Isn't that interesting? Because we will, you know, we bow at the schedule of what the soccer coach said Thursday night.

We gotta show up. We don't negotiate that. We just, but we negotiate.

We don't have any of those kind of standards in our home. Right, exactly. Everything else is up for negotiation.

And then we do go on a date night. We're back to now we're, oh, I gotta check a few things. We're on the phone the whole time and we didn't really go in a restaurant today.

It's like, wow, no one is actually, what are we doing in here? Yes, how many times you'll see two couples that are sitting across from one another and they're on their phones. I hope you're at least texting each other while you're sitting there. My sister one day was, sent me a text and we were texting back and forth.

And then all of a sudden she, and I realized that my wife was sitting near me. She was also texting my sister. Oh gosh.

In a whole different stream message. And my sister Barbara suddenly put two and two together. She's like, you guys are sitting next to me and they're texting me, aren't you? And the answer was, yeah.

And we all just realized what we were doing. You were worse than a teenager there, Jeff. Of course, she wasn't sitting at the same table.

She was across the country. But anyway. Well, that's, that's LaBarge, David.

Well, time is short. These are great ideas, Rachel. Anything else just sort of encouraging? Yeah, well, let me put this out there.

Another important part. So we go, we talk about the soccer coach. We've talked about schools.

We've talked about all of that. Those are also valuable because one of the assets that families need are adults your child isn't related to. Yes.

Affirm their values and live into their lives. Coaches, teachers, Sunday school teachers, youth pastors, Mrs. Jones down the road, people who can affirm and be involved in their lives because they oftentimes are the person they'll finally, we were talking about this earlier, how your child comes home and they quote Mrs. Jones down the street. And you're like, I've said that to you a thousand times.

It finally sunk in. Yes. Well, Mrs. Jones is counting on you saying something to her child.

It'll finally sink in with them. That's right. Because they're learning from the community.

Yeah. So we know that one of the great assets is having other adults in our child's life that's involved. So that would be a reason to be involved in all these activities.

Right. The trick is being balanced. Right.

And being involved for reasons to both give and to get. And I think about the often quoted statement that I was looking for a school for my child and found a community for my family. Yes.

And yet so often I hear from school leaders that so often parents, because of all that overload, don't care to volunteer or they just show up just for what they're going to quickly get out of it, but to give back into the community. Now you become one of those other voices encouraging other children. It'd be a reason to linger just a little bit when you're dropping kids off or picking them up or after an event, show up for the events and be sure that you're connecting with other parents there.

And that's opportunity, sure. But it's a great way to look at it, not to be selfish about it, but we need those other parents to have margin too, to speak into our children. And they need ours.

Right. And that's often quote Chap Clark's book, The Sticky Faith, where he talks about the five to one ratio, because it does take a village. It's gotta be other people that are saying the same thing.

Amen. All right. Well, Jim, thanks so much for your words of encouragement.

God bless you, man. I'm just glad these weren't overly complicated rituals because I'm

overloaded. Yeah, I guess I could, maybe I'll dream some up, but why don't we start with the basic stuff? That's right.

Yeah. Just this, that's what's beautiful about it. And you know what, if you haven't ever done it, there's grace, forgiveness, you can start today.

It's not a big deal. What's the old saying? The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best is today.

Yeah. Go plant a tree. Plant some trees, Jim.

Thanks so much. Yeah, you bet. Well, you did it.

You stayed till the very end of the podcast. Thanks so much for listening to this conversation and a special thanks to our sponsors who make this episode possible.