

BCL ep367 What Are We Training Our Children to Love? with Keith McCurdy

Augustine and other church fathers argued that the sin and disorder in life don't arise necessarily from loving bad things, but more often from loving the good things in the wrong order. Famously known as the *Ordo Immoris*, the ordering of loves, raising the next generation involves helping ourselves and our children love the right things in the right order. Do we love our work more than our family? Our children more than our marriage? Ourselves more than our neighbor? How do we rightly order what is most important in our busy world, ensuring that we keep ourselves balanced and our children poised to flourish? Join us for this episode of Basecamp Live.

To Basecamp Live, now your host, Davies Owens. Welcome back to Basecamp Live. Davies Owens here, as always, on the journey with you, raising the next generation.

What a joy to meet so many of you as I travel around the country. We need at some point to have a big Basecamp Live gathering and celebrate all the work that's happening around the world. I think it's so easy to be at an individual school and think, gosh, we are just the only ones in town that, or maybe even in the country that are doing education this way, being a little countercultural.

I just want to encourage you from my vantage point, there is a true renewal movement happening around the world with classical Christian education. You're a part of it, and I'm so grateful that you're here each week. I'm here every week.

I hope you'll join me as we explore different ways to carry out this enormous task of raising the next generation to the top of what can feel like Mount Everest, hence the Basecamp Live image. It's not about camping gear. It's about living the life of raising the next generation.

We need to stop as we are right now and have a Basecamp around the fire time and reflect on ways to encourage one another, which we're going to do today with Keith McCurdy, who I'm excited to have back. I want to put a special request out. If you have an alumni in your school community that you think would be open to being interviewed, you hopefully just heard last week Ashton Lawrence's story.

There are so many now that have graduated our K-12 schools and moved out into the world and reflecting back on their education. I'd love to capture those stories. Just email me info at Basecamp Live.

I'd love to reach out to them. Special shout out in this episode to a number of folks to Tim Houston, head of school at the Madison Christian School in Groveport, Ohio. It was my privilege to be there with you guys almost a year ago.

It's hard to believe speaking and engaging with your faculty and your parents. Tim, a big shout

out to you. Cindy Shaw, head of school at Shiloh Christian Academy in Newcastle, Oklahoma.

Thank you guys as well for being a part of Basecamp Live, as well as using Zipcast at your schools. We're grateful for that commitment and that connection with us. I'm so excited to have Keith McCurdy back.

Keith really needs no introduction. I don't know at what point we're going to officially make him a co-host. He has been super busy.

He's got a big book coming out. Keith appears every, I don't know, every four to six weeks or so, but it's been a little bit longer than that. Keith, if you've not heard him before, is an amazing individual as he works with children and parents and individuals now for over 30 years in the field of mental health, probably more than 30,000 people he's met with.

He has a Master of Arts in Education Specialist from James Madison University. He's the President and CEO of Total Life Counseling. He's licensed in the state of Virginia as a professional counselor, as well as licensed in marriage and family therapy.

He is a really perfect person who has a heart for raising the next generation for classical education. He, every day, is dealing with the issues that we're facing. I know you're going to enjoy this conversation where we talk about ordering what is important in our lives.

Before we jump into that, just a special word of thank you to our sponsors for this episode, Wilson Hill Academy, Life Architects Coaching, Wise Phone, the Champion Group, and our friends at the Herzog Foundation. Please take a look on our partners page, as well as, of course, Zipcast. We are close to 100 schools now.

We have over 10,000 people listening on a typical week to a Zipcast episode at their school, getting key updates from school leadership with their personal voice. As long as high-value syndicated content on parenting and classical education and school life that the school leadership picks just to serve their parent community. It's a really wonderful resource.

I do want to encourage you to take a look at it. If you're a school leader, go to zipcast.media. Without further ado, here's my conversation with Keith McCurdy. Keith, welcome back to Base Camp Live.

It's great to be back. It's been a little while. It has been a while.

It's been way too long. You must be really busy, Keith. Well, kind of.

Traveling a bunch, trying to finish a book, Raising Sturdy Kids, trying to wrap that up. It's been a little hectic, but all good. I know you and I are traveling all the time.

People often stop me when I'm speaking at a school. They're like, well, I thought Keith was always with you. I'm like, well, sometimes we're together, but there are a lot of times that we're dividing and conquering the great world of parenting needs out there.

It's always good to be together with you. For folks that don't know, I'm excited about your book. People have always said that.

Well, where's your book? That's the next question, but there will be a book that's coming out. Yes. We are hoping, actually targeting sometime released this spring.

Great. Looking forward to it. Hopefully, it's a very practical guide to parents that really follows a simple formula of where are we today? What's the problem? Why have we gotten so off track? And then what are the principles that really should be guide us in parenting? And then what are some of the practical applications? The title is Raising Sturdy Kids.

I'm doing it with classical academic press. Hopefully, we're going to have something out soon. Well, there's such a longing for like, give me the practical.

What am I going to do? I need the owner's manual. I think it's going to be a great success. Speaking of just being out on the road, one of the things I love, and I know you do too, is we're just getting to hear from countless school leaders and parents on just sort of what's the latest angst or the successes that are there.

But the vantage point you have in particular, especially with your counseling, is just hearing day over day from people in terms of things that they're maybe struggling with or maybe, I hate to say what's trending in the world of struggle, but what are you hearing? What are you seeing? I'm always curious from your vantage point on the front lines. Yeah, it's interesting. I'll share two things.

One is I continue to get feedback from folks that applying simple changes in the right space makes such a significant difference. And sometimes we pollute the idea of parenting so much with all kinds of elaborate strategies and plans when really there are some core simple things we do. And when we do them, that's when we really see and generate good change.

And the example of that is a question I had. I was just in Houston doing an event at a large church, and I was getting mic'd up and talking to the young woman in the back who was running all their sound equipment, and she was 32 weeks pregnant. And she said, okay, if you're going to give me one piece of advice, this is my first child, what would you tell me? And I thought, you know- That's a great question.

That's a great question. And I wish people would ask that more. And what I told her was this.

I said, oh my gosh, I know exactly what I'm going to tell you. And I said, it has nothing to do with your child. It is don't make the mistake that so many of us make unintentionally, which is we start having children and we put the marriage on the shelf.

We stop cultivating and growing the primary relationship that God has given us to raise our children. And I think it's that whole idea of the order of how, not the order of priority necessarily, because priority means one thing, but it's the order of operation, order of

importance of the different key things we have in life. And to me, that's a common conversation when parents come in my office and we talk about raising kids.

One of the things that I sample right away is, are you growing your marriage relationship? Are you actively pursuing growing that or have you begun identifying yourself solely as moms and dads? Wow. That's a really, it's again, it seems so utterly basic, but to your point, if we don't get the foundation pieces in there, everything else downstream starts to fall apart. It's, you know, it's, I was just at the Quorum Day Academy in the Dallas area, shout out to the team there.

And they had me come in to speak on a symposium and they had me pick the topic of the order. It's hard to say sometimes, *ordo amoris*, which some people are like, that must be a French perfume, maybe the odor of love. And it's like, no, that'd be the order in Latin order of ordering of your loves.

J.D. Vance last year, I think you use that term and it kind of got a little buzz from for a while and faded back away. But it's a term that is really in line with what you're talking about, Keith. It's a St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas had argued back in their day that basically sin and disorder and life arise not from loving the bad things, but from loving good things in the wrong way.

So it's just sort of, it's the upside down world. We've put the kids at the top of the list and is what you're saying instead of our marriage. And, and I know you've, you've talked about this before.

I mean, maybe walk, well, let's, before we get into sort of the order, all of the ordering pieces, but just continue this idea of like, where, how are you seeing the, this bearing negative for it? I mean, when you don't get this right, the problem then becomes what? K.D. Well, the problem is reality of having a foundation that cannot withstand the rigors of raising children. Because it's all of us who have had children know this, it's a messy pursuit. I mean, we're broken people raising broken people in a world that kind of comes after us in many ways.

You know, I had this discussion as well, just the other night at this, it's this big church events. I said, you know, if you think about culture, you go back to, you know, the fifties and sixties, think about all the television shows back then, whether it was leave it to beaver, Andy Griffith, the Waltons, a little house on the Prairie culture lined up with morality. Every one of those shows, even though they were not religious shows, the primary plots of those shows on most episodes was some moral or virtue lesson.

And so we were entertained by morality and offended by deviancy. Well, that's flipped. You know, today we're entertained with deviancy and offended when someone speaks of morality and virtue.

So we have to understand that we have to have a solid foundation because culture no longer supports raising kids well. So we have to have that foundation in place. And too many times we don't, because again, we're not cultivating that relationship.

And in many ways, it's almost like that relationship stops developing at the point we start having kids and we think, okay, we're married, we're committed. We're going to rely on this. Without continuing to nurture it, to fertilize it, to water it, to grow it.

And it's amazing to me what happens when I have parents in my office then that are completely disconnected. And if they're disconnected relationally and emotionally, how on earth are they going to be united in the face of raising their children and teenagers? Well, it seems kind of illogical in a sense at face value, because you're saying it would seem like if the challenge of raising children is more difficult than ever, that you're just naturally going to need to prioritize them more in the season of their adolescence or their grammar school years. And so, again, just to kind of think about this order, because, and I've seen you give this talk and there's a chart where how the modern world orders at the very top is you use the word world.

So it's basically just, yeah, go through that ordering. Yeah, let me walk you through it. Most families come into my office and a conversation I have when I say, how's your, are you really cultivating growing relationship? What order are you operating from? And they say, what do you mean? And I say, think about your expenditure of time, energy, and money.

Three categories you can think about. Usually what gets the most of that focus is the world. All the things we've signed up for, all the things we've committed to, all the different busy things that we have played into, the cultural message of the busier we are, the more connected, committed we are, the better it is.

The whole FOMO problem, got to do it all. The whole FOMO problem, right. Yeah.

The second category after world is our kids. And then it's everything we've signed up for our kids, everything we've signed our kids up for, all the different extracurriculars, all the different things. Not saying that the things we've signed up for are bad, but just that takes all our time, energy, and money.

Yeah. Then the third is family. And the way this comes in, I hear this conversation in my office all the time from parents, especially when their kids are very overcommitted.

They're like, oh my gosh, we're losing context to family. We're going to have dinner together on Thursday nights as a family. And then the other parent says, no, wait a minute, that's when Johnny has soccer.

This idea that we're going to grab one little moment to exist in the same place, and that's family. Yeah. Then the fourth on the list is marriage.

But at this point, we're giving each other leftovers. Yeah. We're giving each other our worn out self.

You know, I was talking this morning with a guy on this same topic, and I said to him, he said, yeah, he said, we really try to do a date night once a month, and that's even hard. Once a

month. And I said, well, I said, well, number one, date nights are horrible.

And he went, what? But I read it in books all the time. I'm like, they're horrible. I'm like, how do you feel at night? Oh, I'm worn out.

I said, right. I said, it's a date night. I said, you're typically giving each other your worn out self.

You know, the best dates for a married couple, especially with kids are Saturday mornings or Sundays after church, or it's also easy to find babysitters. But the idea of we usually, when marriage is fourth on the list, it's not, it is not a priority in any way. And it's getting leftovers.

It's not getting first fruit. And then the last is God. And it's funny because we, you know, strong believers still say the role of God at this point in life is praying a whole lot for all the mess going on, making sure we're at church, making sure we're in Sunday school.

But it's, it's more of an afterthought because of a lack of time or commitment because everything else has filled it up. And so, so I share this with couples and they're, I mean, usually they're like, yep. Yeah, that's us.

And I, and I say, what's the correct order? And they say the exact opposite. I said, right. It's a simple order we see in Genesis.

God creates man and says, be in relationship with me. You know, the first thing God establishes is the relationship we're called to with him. Then when Adam's alone, he doesn't give him 10 friends.

It gives him a wife and says, now the two of you become one, gives them an identity. You know, C.S. Lewis uses the analogy of a bow and a violin. I'm in Virginia.

I think he meant to say bow and a fiddle, but didn't want to offend people. And the idea is two, two things become one instrument, reach their full purpose. I use the analogy of a skin graft, two pieces of flesh going into be one functional piece of flesh.

That's the unity God calls us to. And the funny thing is nowhere in scripture, we ever called to now not operate out of that unity. And then after that, he starts giving us a job.

He gives us a job after he gives us that unity and we're called to cultivate, manage all of creation, but then cultivate family. And then to raise our children up and assimilate them to the identity we've claimed for family, not parent them based on their uniqueness. In a sense, have this idea that if I'm a McCurdy or I'm an Owens, what does that mean? And, and, you know, it means we're honest.

It means we're hardworking. It means we're faithful. It means, you know, whatever words we would use.

And so we're assimilating our children to that so they can learn what to love, what is good, what

is not. And then the world gets the leftovers. And the idea is the way it's informed is the higher levels inform the ones below.

Our relationship with God directs how we build our marriage. Our relationship with God and how we've crafted our marriage defines how we identify who we are as a family, what we allow and don't allow, what we expose our children to, how we grow them relates to how we've identified who we are as a family. And it's in that order that we proceed.

Now, I'll tell you a funny story about this. Several years ago, gosh, 20 years ago, one of my buddies loves giving me a hard time. He said, you know, you actually told me something good in Sunday school class one time.

I was teaching Sunday school. I said, only once? And he said, we went over this in Sunday school class. We were talking about the ordering of life, that God is a God of order and he really does structure it in a certain way.

And he said, I wrote it down on the only thing I had, a coffee stained napkin. And he said, it hung on my fridge for probably six or seven years. Wow.

And he said, it's amazing. He had like seven kids. He said, it's amazing when stress level got high and my wife and I realized things were just not where they ought to be.

I could almost always go back and look at that napkin and figure out what the problem was. That's unbelievable. He said, because we started focusing on good things, but in the wrong order.

Where does, I want to, I want to understand, yeah, some of the ways you see this played out. Let's take a quick break and come back. And I also want to understand where does, where does work fit? I mean, you mentioned work briefly, but I think about jobs in general, rightly so, are big parts of our life.

Absolutely. So let me, I want to hear where that actually is supposed to fit in to the order as well. Let's take a quick break and we'll be right back to continue the conversation.

If you're seeking an education that helps your child thrive academically and spiritually, Wilson Hill Academy has spent years developing a model that I want you to know about. In their free guide, you'll see how their thoughtfully sequenced curriculum prepares students for college and how a biblical worldview helps them understand the world around them with clarity and how their discussion-based classes teach them to think critically, not just what to think. You'll also discover how their teachers equip students to live purposefully for Christ.

With accredited live online classes, your child can learn from master teachers anywhere with an internet connection, all within a community that has transformed families like yours. Download their free guide today at [wilsonhillacademy.com slash guide](http://wilsonhillacademy.com/slash/guide), or in the link in our show notes. During this short break, I have a special invitation to all school leaders, administrators, and

teachers.

I want you to imagine for a moment, stepping away from your everyday routine at school and diving deep into the rich foundations of Christian education, surrounded by world-class scholars, seasoned classroom teachers, and administrative experts with years of experience running schools with a lot of wisdom to share. That's exactly what the Herzog Foundation's Institute is offering. I've had the joy of serving as a training coach for the last few years, leading their two and a half day training on spiritual formation and another one on parent engagement.

They offer close to 50 unique training events ranging from board governance to marketing to classroom best practices. They even offer a training on how to teach the great books. And the best part of all? Well, thanks to the generosity of the Herzog Foundation, these training events, including lodging, are completely free for Christian educators.

Institutes are located around the country in beautiful locations, including at the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., and the Reagan Library in Santa Barbara. Don't miss this incredible opportunity. Check out the details at theherzogfoundation.com. Keith, I love this idea of the ordering of life.

Maybe you need to make part of your new resources coffee stain napkins that you could make available to mail out to have a little magnet put on the fridge. I mean, seriously, again, isn't it shocking how the basics are the things we always stumble over? And it seems like, well, yeah, I know all that, but maybe we don't live it out real well. We'll get into how to do it practically.

But right before the break, I said, okay, Keith, this is great, but where is work? Because we are called to work. Adam worked in the garden before the fall. Is that part of the world? I mean, where does that slice into this whole thing? Yeah, you know, that's one of the questions I get in my office after I share this.

Folks reflect, like, man, that is so true. And then it's like, wait a minute, what about work? And I'm like, well, because they think work's the world. So I'm like, yeah, just, you know, whatever you got to give to work.

Tell my boss that. Yeah. So if we go back to the order God put life in, He called Adam and Eve to become one.

Then He gave them all of creation to manage, to function in, to cultivate, to enjoy before establishing the family. Work is a part of our relationship with God. It really goes at the top.

But the key is this. Now, there's a term that's used all the time, work-life balance. That is the craziest term there is.

Because usually when I have a, usually it's a young employee, a younger person in the workforce, you know, work-life balance, my, you know, I got to get up. I'm like, great. Okay.

So how many days in the week are there? They're like five. No, they're actually seven days a week. They're like, oh, okay, seven.

I'm like, so, you know, how many waking hours do you have every day? Multiply that by seven. No, no, no, no, no. I want to multiply it by five.

I'm like, no, wait a minute. If you're talking about balance, you have to include all seven days. And all of a sudden they're like, wait, okay, this doesn't make sense.

Because if we actually shot for straight balance, most of us would be working a whole lot more. Balance is the wrong term. The term is harmony.

Some weeks, 50 hours is not enough. Some weeks, 20 is too much. The barometer is not the hours.

The barometer is, number one, is the work good, healthy work? I mean, there's a lot of jobs we can do that are not, I think. So we have to evaluate the nature of the work, the nature of whether or not we see this work as valuable in God's kingdom. I mean, I really do push people on that.

And there are a lot of ways to look at that. I mean, sometimes work is the way to make a good living to then pay for, afford, navigate these other great things in the kingdom of God. And that's fine.

But the key is, is it in harmony? How I work and what I do, is it in harmony with creating a healthy family? Is it in harmony with what it takes to navigate a healthy family, raise healthy kids? That's the key. So work actually is part of our relationship with God. It's what he called us to right after he put us together in marriage.

And it's a key part of how he wants us to function in the kingdom. And it sounds like you're describing this in, primarily in terms of our time allocations. I mean, what are the things that we dedicate time to, but it also, I mean, ended thinking of this, this model and the Ordo Amoris of the ordering of the loves.

It really is at a more visceral level, like the things that you're putting mindshare into that you care most about that are occupying your thought life, right? I mean, it's really, it's not just, I drove to, we'd sign up for two afterschool sports. We're going to go to one. It's deeper than that.

It is. It's really looking at this and saying, what has value? You know, what does God say says value? And in what order does he say to value those things? And when we start looking at that with a value proposition, rather than just time, I mean, I get into the conversation with folks, time, energy, and money, but it goes to really what has value, right? And how are we going to value them in a healthy way? But we also have to keep in mind that healthy people say no to good things. We have measure.

We're able to say no to good things. We can fill ourselves up with way too many good things thinking, oh, but all these are good. I have volunteered for four committees at church, uh, my kids on, you know, three travel teams and all the coaches are believers.

And I mean, we can justify anything we can't, and we can justify these things saying, but they're good. Yes. But how do they affect the overall order? Our ability to value things as they should be valued.

Yeah. And that's where we run into conflict. And most families I deal with as we walk through this, they say, we are not valuing things in the way or the order that we should.

Yeah. And there's, and there's work that has to be redone in that. And then of course the foundation of that we come back to is the relationship with God and then their marriage, looking at those two things.

And a lot of the practical work we end up doing is reorienting the marriage first. And then we get into the family identity, the children and things like that. And it's true.

Children, you know, our children are like bacteria to the marriage. They're always trying to climb up on top and tear it apart. Oh, that's a great image.

They probably have some bacteria in their fingers too. So then you get sick from your kids. That's a whole other problem.

Right. Don't touch them. This time of year.

I definitely want to shift here in a moment to really let's get practical. How do you actually, you know, is it again, just get the calendar out and adjust it or, but I think just for everyone to understand this is more than it, there is a calendaring element to this, but it's more substantive than that. It's literally the, it is back to what do you, what do you deem most important? What do you love the most? And this is that, that again, that tension of like, you know, is comfort in our, in our world.

It seems like leisure and comfort is loved a lot more than pursuing things that are true. I mean, we just have this default setting to, I'm tired. Let me just veg and Netflix for five hours or doom scrolling or whatever happens because in effect we have decided that's more important than maybe, you know, pursuing our marriage or, or, you know, or we put in, yeah, to your point, it's sometimes it's things like we can put health in.

Some people are just obsessed about, we got to be at the gym all the time, but how could the gym be bad? But that out of order of other things then becomes less important. So yeah, when I go back to, you know, a word I used at the very beginning of this cultivation, you know, think of gardening. You know, am I going to be the failed farmer that decided in the winter it was too cold to till the ground in the spring? It was too rainy to plant in the summer.

It was too hot to, you know, to cultivate. And then come fall, I have nothing, nothing to harvest. So we are, our momentary comfort often gets in the way of long-term flourishing, the fruit that we're looking to develop.

And so many of those things mean there are times when I'm not going to be comfortable in the moment. Although I would argue that when folks work at this and begin operating out of a correct order, they do enjoy more moments as well, but they're not afraid to maintain the order when it's hard because they have a long, long view. The long, well, and this is, I'm going to take another break here, but before we do, I want to just, this seems to be, I think the tension that I, if I'm putting it in my listener's ear, I'm thinking, okay, well, I don't disagree with any of this.

In fact, I think this is really important. It's a good little model, but it's like telling somebody that ideally you're working out three times a week or 20 minutes a day of cardiovascular or whatever. Like people can agree to these things, but then you come down to this reality.

I saw a stat recently that 41%, only 41% of Gen Zers believe that they're flourishing in their life. So you've got just a general malaise, a general exhaustion, a general, I know, but I don't really care right now. I'm kind of in survival mode.

So I want to understand, like, how do you pull yourself up to the point? Like, oh my gosh, Keith, there's one more thing I got to, now I got to work on this. And I got that wrong. And it's like, there's a point where you're like, whatever, I'm just surviving.

Yeah. And I challenge folks. It's a difference between evaluating, am I just doing good things or am I cultivating good things? Because that can be very different processes.

There's some overlap, but am I just in the moment collecting good things that in the moment can feel good at different times, you know, involved in what everybody says is important or what I need to be doing, or am I really cultivating for the long-term for what truly is healthy? I mean, I ask young adults all the time, to your point, they're not flourishing. And I said, well, are you doing anything good? Oh yeah. And they tell me all the great things.

And I say, okay, well, what's missing? And it's funny, you know what they almost always come back to? I don't feel like I have meaningful connection. And it's, yeah, because that's one of the biggest misses today. Yeah.

It's the depth. And so let's take a break. And I want to hear when we come back.

I mean, it seems like, again, there has to be a carrot at the end of the stick. There's got to be some higher level motivation that says it's worth saying no to this to say yes to that. So I want to understand that.

So let's take a break. We'll be right back. School leaders, if you've ever wondered how to make school fundraising truly effective while being meaningful and mission-driven, check out Advance.

It's an event being run by our good friends at the Champion Group. The Advance gathering is April 8th through the 10th, 2026 in Greensboro, North Carolina. And here's the best part.

It is completely free to attend. You just have to cover travel and lodging. Advance is for heads of schools and boards and development directors, leaders who feel the pressure to raise big dollars without losing sight of their calling.

At Advance, you're going to find tools and training and encouragement while connecting with peers from around the country. You're going to learn from top development experts and leave with real-world strategies that you can put into practice right away. Plus, every attendee receives a complimentary development evaluation and review.

Spots are limited. It's a great opportunity. Don't wait.

Register today. Check out the links in the show notes for more information as well as on our Basecamp Live partners page. Today's episode of Basecamp Live is brought to you by my friend Chris Casper, who you heard on a recent episode.

His invention, the Wyze phone, is a much-needed third way, providing a solution from the dangers of a smartphone on the one hand and the limited capacities of an old-school flip phone on the other. His simple, distraction-free phone design for families who want technology to serve their real lives and give us and our older children a way to do basic essentials like calling or texting or maps without the web browser and the social media and the endless apps that can pull them and us into the addictive time-wasting aspects of a smartphone. I personally have a Wyze phone and I can vouch that it is an excellent solution and an appropriate way to use technology that supports virtue and focus and healthy habits.

Check out the link in our show notes and on our Basecamp Live website partners page where Chris is offering Basecamp Live listeners a discount. Keith, we're in a world today where there's no shortage of good information about good things to do in your life and let's get our godly order of life all worked out and everybody's thumbs up and then it's like, oh my gosh, I've actually got to change something. I got to motivate myself right now to this new way of being.

Help people understand practically how do we shift to getting our lives in order as God intended. You know, I had a call this morning right before we got online and I had the same conversation with a guy. You know, neat family, several kids, very successful but struggling with connection with his wife and vice versa.

She's struggling with him, struggling with some of the kids and stuff like that and so I said to him, I said, well, I said we can approach this one of a couple ways. I can give you a list of 20 things you need to do differently or we can tweak a few small things that can begin demonstrating to you the value as to why you want to maybe go change 20 things later and he said, yeah, let's do that one. I said, okay.

I said, well, and in their issue, we had talked through the order and he said, yeah, he said, we

started having kids and we love each other but our relationship is never a priority over the kids. Our relationship is never a priority over other obligations that are all good. We're doing good things.

We're in a good Christian, you know, a good faith-based school, actually in a classical school. We're in a good church community but our marriage is just not a primary focus. I said, great.

Well, let's go to the top of the order then and the second one down on marriage, I said, let me give you three things to start with that aren't major changes in life but they begin to create the right connection which actually creates the motivation to dig more into this and I said, number one, it's your point earlier, Davies, you know, there's a little bit of calendar work that you need to do, especially when you have a house full of kids. So, I asked this question to most folks. I said, do you all have dinner together on Sunday nights? Most folks say, yeah.

Okay. Before you leave the dinner table, this takes like three minutes, you and your spouse sit there and say, what do we have going on this week and actually look at a physical calendar. In the tech world we live in today, again, technology can add to a flourishing life when we use it as a tool for something good.

Get a Google shared calendar and sit there and say, here's what we have going on. You will learn something that you didn't know. You will learn of something that your wife knew about or that your husband knew about that's not on your radar.

It's just, hey, we're actually going to walk through the busyness of life together in the beginning of that. We're actually going to declare what's happening, what's going on, what we have on the schedule. So, this guy's like, yeah, because I never know what's happening.

He's like, yeah, I mean, he said, we know, but we don't know. We're always like, all right, who's going where today? Who's doing this? And I said, okay, number two, do you have dinner every Thursday night together? And he said, yeah, most Thursday nights. I said, great.

Then that's when you look at the weekend. You sit back down, look at your calendar, because I guarantee you some things have changed. And this is where you and your wife sync up on what are the next three days going to look like? Because typically over the next three days, you have more opportunity for connection with your spouse if you use it wisely.

And so, he said, yeah, we'll do that. And what happens, I remember when kids were at our house, I'd be looking at the weather. I realize it's going to be nice and sunny on Saturday morning.

I'm thinking, yes, I'm getting out early in the yard and doing work. My wife notices it's going to be nice and sunny. She's like, yes, we're going to go downtown to farmer's market and do stuff.

So, I get up early. I'm back in the yard tractor out. My wife walks out like, what are you doing? Just lack of communication.

So, I tell folks, change your communication. Get on the same page about the busyness of life before you change any of the busyness. That's the key.

Don't go randomly changing stuff. First, get on the same page about just what it is. It's so almost troublingly basic.

And it's like, well, we're too sophisticated for that because we all know calendars. We'll figure it out or whatever it may be. So, that's again, it's just, it's in the end, the basic things are the most priority.

Those are the priorities to then set the trajectory for the week. So, I love that. Right.

Second thing. I said to him, I said, you're failing at date nights once a month. I said, so, let's up the ante a little bit.

The best time to go out with your spouse and give yourselves the first fruit is Saturday mornings, Saturday afternoon, Sunday afternoons after church. It is also the easiest time to find babysitters if you need a babysitter because you're not competing with them going out with friends in the evening. And it's cheaper to pay them during the day than at night.

So, there's just so many benefits. That's great. And this is where I get them to cultivate.

If they have family in town or whatever, I say, get them on a schedule. Project out and then actually get out for a couple hours every other Saturday morning, every other Saturday afternoon, Sunday afternoon, whatever. A couple hours with your spouse.

The idea is you're carving out time to say, this relationship is so important. We're going to go do something enjoyable together. Now, there are some rules.

You're not allowed to talk about your kids. You're not allowed to talk about your finances. You're not allowed to talk about issues.

If something's going on that you need to talk about, you set a different time for that. This is a time you hold sacred for enjoying the relationship. Yeah.

That's good. And then the third thing. Yeah.

I said, you know, one of the biggest struggles we have tonight or right now for parents is in the evening. We default to scrolling. Yeah.

I mean, we just do. So many people, we just default to that. And so, I asked this guy.

I said, so, you know, tell me about that. He goes, yeah. I said, you know, my tank is empty at night.

And I just, you know, I'm just, I'm scrolling whenever I need to. And I'm doing that. And then we try to go to bed on time.

And I said, well, there's an amazing thing. When you start and end the day with your spouse, it demonstrates value. And now some spouses, we may not always get up at the exact same time.

And we may have schedules that throw that off, but we absolutely can claim nighttime in most cases. And so, what I suggested to him, I said, how hard would it be for you to take the last hour of night? Everything's shut down. Kids are in bed.

The last hour is completely tech free. Just the last hour. Yeah.

And rather than coming up with, you know, checking your screen time and trying to come up with crazy rules, just claim an hour that right now you don't claim. And the purpose is for you and your wife to exist in the same space together to close the day. Yeah.

And I've recommended that to thousands of families. And so, I said to him, I said, so, if you do these three things for a month, that means you have two day dates. You're talking Sunday nights and Thursday nights.

And you're claiming the last hour of the day with your wife. Y'all can sit and talk. You can, I mean, if y'all want to watch a show every now and again together, but no tech influence in your hands.

Yeah. Claim that last hour of the day. I said, a month from now, what would your wife say about that month? He said, I can only imagine.

I said, what would, what would you say about that month? He goes, I wouldn't be talking to you anymore. I said, that's my job to be unnecessary. But in reality, he could very clearly see, yeah, without making major upheaval in anything we're doing, even if we're overscheduled, just doing those things differently would begin to demonstrate the value proposition.

In other words, all good things, but giving them the value in the order that they should have at the top of that pile, giving value to the marriage, because there are things we do specifically to keep it functioning well. And that's usually a starting point or that and very similar things with a couple. Yeah.

And I think even as you're describing that there's so many other secondary benefits. I mean, you're not doing the blue light on your eyeballs and the bed and then you can actually sleep better. And now you're waking up rested.

I mean, there's just like, I mean, it's just, again, there's, it's back to, you know, we tell kids in the youth group that, um, back when I did youth group days, it's just, you know, there's God made this owner's manual. There's a, there's a priority set. It's biblical of putting the godly order of life together.

And if you get it out of order, it's like so many things in life, you know, whatever analogy you want to use a tire that's out of balance and it wobbles, the whole car shakes. I mean, get it back

and put the balance back on. So it's so again, I think the danger of people hearing this is like, well, that's just so obvious.

That's so simple. But it's again, the good news is to your point, take a couple of minutes. You'll get it.

It's not going to take a hours and hours of counseling complexity here. Yeah. Yeah.

And I tell parents all the time I go back and I think my grandparents, um, they never struck me as people that were stressed about the idea of raising kids. And it's funny, my parents, I'm one of five, we had a whole house full and except for a very few moments that we laugh about, um, my parents, they kind of had a simple mindset about raising kids. The problem today is we're listening to too many of the wrong voices and we're not getting back to some very simple basics that I think scripture lays out very clearly.

And if we just focused on those for a while, it'd be amazed. I think we would be amazed at how much life calms down. And then the other thing I tell folks, you know, to your point is, you know, put the coffee stain napkin on the fridge, just reminding yourself of the correct order.

And when things get crazy before you come up with 12 new rules to calm the craziness, go back and see if you got out of order. Yeah, that's beautiful. So it's just, again, in the end here, how the godly order that we want got to the top marriage, second family kids and world.

So if you're listening, go find a coffee stain napkin, write that down and you too can, uh, so I got to start marketing coffee stain. I really think, you know, it's a very live sturdy theme. It's been out in the dirt.

You've been hacking, you know, hacking the hiking the trail with your name, put a bullet hole in it. I think that's a good, I see this summer conference is going to be at the booth. We'll have this ready for you.

So Keith, thanks so much. This is again, such a great wisdom and insight. And I just know it'll be a blessing to many people.

I look forward to having you back on soon. We're trying to keep the rhythm going here for these sturdy moments. Thanks again.

Uh, you're welcome. Thanks for having me again. Thank you for listening to this episode of base camp live.

Be sure to check out our website, basecamp.live.com for more than eight years of timeless episodes that you'll find helpful and encouraging as well as the helpful resources offered on our partners page. The views and opinions expressed in this program are those of the speakers and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of our partners like the Herzog foundation. See you back next week.