

## **BCL ep368 Classical Home Habits with Jeff Hendricks**

One of the greatest gifts that we can give our children is to have healthy habits, deeply formed actions that eventually come naturally. As parents and educators, we are ultimately in the habit-forming business, guiding students way beyond just gaining knowledge and conveying information. Formation shapes what our children love, and healthy habits are essential.

In this episode, we'll share some best examples of simple, practical habits that you can immediately implement for children of any age or grade. 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.

Davies Owens, your host here with you. Always grateful that you made the decision to join us this week. We've been doing this now for almost eight years, coming together every week to encourage one another as we walk up and maybe even climb up the side of this giant mountain called Raising the Next Generation.

So we're here just to catch our breath, be encouraged with one another. I am definitely encouraged in that I am recording this actually on the road, which is always a blessing to get out to schools. I'm here at the Providence Christian School of Texas in the Dallas area.

Jeff Hendricks, the headmaster and friend, graciously invited me to spend some time on campus and to have an evening speaking, training, and encouraging parents and staff. Jeff, it's been a blessing to be with you and your amazing group of staff and parents. And so a huge shout out to all of you at Providence and commend you for the great work that you're doing in raising the next generation.

If you don't know Jeff, he joined the school back in 2005. He's a wonderful example of someone who has continued to be faithful and obedient and serving in this community, beginning in 2005 as a teacher, and then initially as a teacher, initially instructing in algebra before stepping into middle school, English, and history. He then served as head of middle school from 2014 until his appointment as headmaster.

Jeff holds a bachelor's degree from Gordon College and a master's degree from the University of Dallas. He's married to Jessie and they are blessed with three children. I look forward to you hearing this interview with Jeff.

Before we do, I want to do a couple more shout outs to other great school leaders and schools

around the country who are part of the Zipcast and Basecamp Live family. Bethany Elston, head of school at Berea Christian Academy in Katy, Texas. Shout out to you, Bethany, to your parents and to your community, as well as Roy Griffith.

Roy, it was a joy to be with you back in October. Roy is the headmaster at Rockbridge Academy in Crownsville, Maryland. Thank you again for your support and encouragement in helping us all work together to raise the next generation.

And of course, as always, before we jump into the interview, I'd like to thank those partners, those organizations that are doing great work to support the work we're doing in Christian education. The Champion Group and the work that they do with Feed the Need. It's a fantastic way to raise funds within your school, as well as Wilson Hill Academy and the great work that they do in bringing classical Christian education online to families all around the world.

Also, I want to say thank you to the Herzog Foundation for their partnership. Our friends at Wyze Phone, which is a great alternative to a fully functioning smartphone, but can still give you all those utilitarian things that you actually need to have done. And of course, our own partnership with Zipcast, and you can learn more at [zipcast.media](http://zipcast.media). All that to say, great partners on our partner page.

And here is my conversation with Jeff. Jeff, welcome to Base Camp Live. Thanks so much for having me, Davies.

It's great to be with you. It is so good to be with you. And we're in person, which is especially good.

And we're here on campus at Providence Classical Christian School, which is a great part of our Tide story. We'll get into that. But tell folks a little bit about yourself.

Yeah, so I've been in classical education and at Providence Christian School now for 21 years. Wow. Worn a lot of different hats, educating in the classroom and administrative roles.

And it's been a real privilege to be part of one community for a long time. That may be in the top, I don't know, top 5%. I mean, I think the average tenure for head of school these days is like 2.4 years.

And to be in the same school for two decades, that is a gift. It's been really fun. And it's great to be able to see alumni that I taught now back in the school as parents and getting to see their children here too is a real privilege.

It's special. Well, for folks that don't know, part of the reason I alluded to this connection, when I was head of school at Heritage Preparatory School in Atlanta, it is a daughter school of Providence. So years and years and years ago, it's a family that left here, went to Atlanta and said, this was too good.

We've got to have this same idea of a classical Christian school with some Charlotte Mason influence in Atlanta. So I don't know, this may be close to my 10th pilgrimage back here to the mothership to kind of learn as I did over many trips when I was head of school just to see how you guys do things. But you've kept the mission.

I don't see any drift going on. This place seems pretty solid. It's a good community to be a part of and a lot of people who are really committed to it.

Yeah. Well, I want to jump into this idea of habits. When I first got wind of one of the many resources that you provide your parents with, I thought this would be really helpful to a number of people to understand.

Typically, you've got, I don't know how many, 12, 15 of these probably that are part of your onboarding for your families. We're not going to have time to get into all of them. And folks who have been around Base Camp Live for any length of time know that we talk a lot about habits.

So why don't we just kind of set the playing field here. What is a habit? Why is that so important for the work you're doing here at Providence with your families? Yeah, well, I mean, part of it, it comes both from the classical tradition and from Charlotte Mason that habits are a powerful tool of formation. And the idea is that repeated action over time becomes instinctive and sort of second nature.

Things that you start to do without thinking about it. So things that require a lot of conscious effort and attention at first, over time with practice, become almost automatic. And I was telling you earlier, I'm teaching my oldest child to drive right now.

And it's really brought it home to me how much that driving, for me, has become habitual and instinctive. But for somebody, just learning requires a great deal of conscious attention and effort that hopefully with practice over time will be almost automatic. And there's things that I do behind the wheel that I'm not really paying attention to, but I just know instinctively how to operate the vehicle.

I was about to say, I don't know if I'm going to be around you when you're driving if you don't know what you're doing. Your point's right on. I mean, imagine the number of things that we do intuitively, habitually, that we don't think about.

I think with Charlotte Mason it said nine out of ten things we do are just habitual. Like the way you put the toothbrush in your mouth. Do you start in the top right or bottom left? Like you wouldn't want to have to think about that all the time.

So tie that back in again to just the work that we're trying to accomplish as a we, because we're part of this larger movement of raising our generation with classical Christian education. So what's the link there? Yeah, so when we talk about virtues, things that we want to be characteristic of our children as adults, like say generosity. We want to raise generous people or

we want to raise hospitable people or courageous people.

These aren't things that just you wake up all of a sudden one day and you're generous or you're hospitable or you're kind. They're the result of repeated small actions that over time become so entwined into your character that you become this person. So habits, the way we think about it, is just what sorts of things do we want to become automatic.

So in the classroom here, for instance, if we want to raise a child to become an adult who looks people in the eye, then we just start when they're very young. And children, when they're very young, absorb these things much more easily than they do, I think, when they're older. It takes a lot more work the older that they get.

So we practice it, looking somebody in the eye. And it requires a teacher or a parent a lot of attention and intentionality at first. But over time, the child doesn't even think about it.

It's just their natural response to another person when they're being spoken to. This is another way to maybe think about why it's a priority is that we— you often hear that probably overused little phrase that we're not so— we're interested in our schools and doing more than information but true formation. So formation inherently requires habit formation.

That's really the heart of what we do. Is that a fair statement? For sure. And it's the character piece that we're after.

We think about the intellect. We think about the character and the heart and the affections. And this is by far the best tool that we know of for the character formation.

Is it fair to say you think that every school teaches habits? I think everybody teaches—learns habits. And some of them are acquired intentionally and some you just fall into. Charlotte Mason, I think, said that children will have habits of one kind or another.

And we as parents and educators are forming them actively or passively all the time. Yeah, I think that's—I absolutely agree with that. One of the things I'm—thanks to your generous invitation speaking to the parents tonight and looking forward to that, one of the points I'll be making is just this idea of the formation of paideia, which is probably a fancier way to talk about habits.

It's the things that we love. It's our affections. And so this really is the core of what we do as educators and as parents is the shaping of habits.

Because you can't just—there's not just good habits and then no habits. There's good habits and then there's bad habits. So you have to be intentional.

Exactly. Exactly. So much of our lives are routine and we just do things without a lot of thought.

And so putting in thought on the front end as to what sorts of things we want to be characteristic of us or of our children is where the importance is. And I think that's—we're

going to get into some specifics because the reality is that, you know, without a vision, the people perish. Without good habits, the people leave their room a mess and they don't brush their teeth and they have bad manners and they become fallen little people that we all are without guidance.

So this is, I think, just a good reminder. There's no neutral setting. Everybody drifts into—what is it? The law of entropy? Things fall apart naturally.

Yes. Well, and you know, one of the things that I think is a common misconception, it's certainly a misconception I had early on, because you think about habit formation and it can feel rather rules-driven or rigid and constraining. But the reality is that the discipline on the front end leads to a great deal of freedom later on.

And the things that you want to be characteristic of your life, again, require very little effort or a conscious effort. When you see an athlete make an incredible play, there's a freedom in there and they're just doing it. But it's the result of a lot of disciplined work and practice over a long period of time.

Or a musician that's able to improvise comes to that ability through a lot of discipline so that the movement of their fingers into the music is almost instinctive and it's beautiful. It's freeing. I'm really glad you're making that point because, again, it's very countercultural to this sort of cultural message that you do you, be anybody you want to be.

Anything that speaks of discipline seems to constrain you. And that's the opposite, actually, of what you're saying. And that's the beauty of, yeah, you do you, you go play the violin and see how that works out.

Or maybe you might want to have a little bit of discipline. Then you can do you and get all creative at the end. But yes, that's, again, a very different message.

But I'm so glad you said it's all about freedom, really. Yes. I think that's the ultimate result of this habit formation.

We're setting children up for lives of joyful freedom. Yeah. Well, let's get into, before we take a break, just let's jump in.

We're going to go through, again, quite a number of them on the list. And you've picked out, I don't know if it's the best of, but maybe the most important to start with. Maybe we'll do it that way.

Where would you start? Like, what's the first habit? You say, okay, let's get this one down. So, the first one on the list is the habit of prayer and reading God's word. And it's probably, obviously, the most important because that's where, when we're talking about spiritual formation, that's the bread and butter.

That's where it happens. And so, we try to model that here in the classroom. We have scripture reading and prayer as part of every school day and encourage families to incorporate that into their homes too.

For some people, it's what they will reflect on and say it's what they learned, kind of their biggest takeaway from their time at the school. I was talking to an alumni mom the other day who mentioned that the school, through the partnership with the school, learned and was trained to start this habit. That they would read the word together as a family every day.

And she looks back on it and says it's one of the greatest gifts that she was able to give her children. It's one of those things, too, that you first said it. I think it's just our fallen nature.

It's like, yeah, yeah, yeah, prayer and reading God's word. That's what Christian people always say. But there's a big difference in sort of knowing and doing.

And the doing is born out in the familiarity of, it's just a part of the routine of the school day. It is. And when I think about the context of the home, sometimes you can get this lofty idea that it's family devotions.

And that the father has to become a pseudo-pastor and create a three-point devotional. And maybe in some context, that's the way it happens. But I think for a lot of people, it can be a lot simpler than that.

And sometimes you just read the word and let it speak for itself. And then you sing a hymn and pray together. And that's all.

And sometimes it will make sense to comment on it or somebody will have a question. And you never know where the conversation will go. But the important thing is that we're saying as a family, this is important to us.

Well, just the fact that it took time out of the day meant it was important. I mean, that's obviously the point. As you're saying that, I'm reminded of, I had a college freshman whose father was a missionary in Belize.

And I remember we went for spring break down to Belize to visit him. And I was struck by every single meal, his father, who was a pastor, but he would just simply, before everybody left the table, pull the Bible over, open it up, read two or three verses. There wasn't any commentary.

It was just, we're ending with God's word. And I was so struck by, oh wait, that's just too simple. Like you've got to have a book or a degree or a thing.

And it's like, no. But I still to this day think of that habit. I tried to bring some of that into my own family because of that.

So it's a great point. Great point. And it can happen when children are very young too.

And I have been struck time and time again by how much they absorb when it doesn't look like they're absorbing anything. Well, they're always absorbing, yes. They're absorbing it all the time.

Far more caught than taught. That's right. That's it.

Well, let's take a quick break. We've got quite a number of these to get through. So we'll be right back after the break and jump into the second of your Best Of series here on The Habits.

Today's episode of Base Camp 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 Base Camp Live website partners page where Chris is offering Base Camp Live listeners a discount. 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](http://theherzogfoundation.com). Okay, Jeff, let's jump back into the list.

What's the second habit you have selected? So, the second one is the habit of attention. Children can't learn, we say all the time, if they're not paying attention. And so, we encourage

families to just work with their children on paying attention.

It involves eye contact, no body movement, active listening without talking. And there's games that you can play around this idea of attention that I think can bring a little levity to it rather than just, hey, listen up, listen up, listen up all the time. You know, you can give multi-step instructions and see if the child can follow through with them.

So, something as simple as, all right, Bobby, I want you to go to your room, I want you to open the second drawer in your dresser, and I want you to get a shirt and then come back to me. And see if they can do that. And then you can make it more and more complicated, but what you're training there is just this habit of paying close and careful attention to instruction as it's given.

As you're saying that, I'm like, and then when Bobby's 18 and you're telling him to pick up something at the grocery store, he actually remembered all five things you told him. That's exactly right. So, this is not, I mean, you start young, but Bobby will someday have to make his own decisions and remember things, yes.

Well, and attention seems like such a simple thing, but we live in a culture of so much distraction that it really is refreshing when somebody is giving their full and undivided attention in a conversation or to a task. I think it's really very uncommon these days. And it's really a way of honoring the person, actually.

And I was struck by this, what I love about your list is you're actually getting very specific. And this idea of just even at a young age, when you ask your child to do something, that they need to stop what they're doing and give you the full attention whenever their name is spoken. Again, just that habit of this whole, the fallacy that you're really alluding to of multitasking.

Like, oh, I can hear you while I'm doing this and doing that. And it's like, no, no, no, I need attention. It's true.

And, you know, Jesus says over and over in the Gospels, he who has ears, let him hear. And there's just this call to pay close attention to the word, to what is true. And it manifests itself in some very simple daily interactions that can be taught and absorbed by children at young ages.

Yeah. What else do you see that you're doing both at school and home that really reinforces attention? So there are, I guess, some drills that we do at school, narration, when a teacher will read a story and then just ask the child to narrate back. This is another thing that we get from Charlotte Mason.

And again, with practice, it's really remarkable how much a child is able to absorb and retain and then deliver back. We do picture studies where you look at a picture and then turn it over and then say everything that you observed about it. There's a lot of just close observation.

And again, at home, it can be as simple as go over there to the window and then come back and tell me everything that you saw outside. And then after they've told you everything, you

send them back, go look again. These things just are almost like offensively, basically.

Yeah, we know that. But here's the problem. I was actually at a classical school, won't name the name, a couple of months ago when I was with seniors.

And I'm a big fan of narration and promoted all the time. And I was with these seniors who presumably were at the capstone year. And so I gave them some little paragraph out of a great book.

And I said, I want you to read it and I want you to turn it over and tell me back what we just read. They weren't trained in narration, but you would think just general classical students. I kid you not, there was not a single one that could do more than just maybe with some encouragement, find one or two kind of paraphrases of the kind of things that they heard as opposed to the details, the author's details and attention, the sequencing.

So again, I'm bringing it up just to say you're right on. Because if we could get that straightened out, what would that do for the rest of your life? If you had formed attention? Well, and the rate at which you can acquire new learning and new skills, if you can pay attention is just exponentially increased. Amazing.

Okay. So what about, well, let's keep going because we've got a bunch of these. So because I don't have attention to wait this long, we've got to go to the next one.

Yeah. What's the next one for you? Obedience is the next one. We talk about the habit of obedience.

First time obedience when a parent or a teacher is giving instruction, the expectation should be that the child responds right away, all the way. And we tag on this with a happy heart line at the end. I will say hopefully with a happy heart, but all the way and right away, even if the heart isn't happy about it.

And this is something, again, that's practiced. But a child should be taught and trained to respond to the authorities that the Lord has placed in their lives, whether that be here at school or in the home. So you don't recommend the, I'm going to count to three or 14 or 83, and if you do it, it'll be great.

Is that not a good idea? No, the expectation is, and they are capable of responding right away. There's no negotiation when it comes to submission to a God-given authority. Now, you and I were talking, actually yesterday, and this came up.

There's obviously, this is, at first glance, maybe if you've not heard this concept before, it may seem a little harsh. There's some, I mean, reasonable concern if it's done in a way that's kind of militaristic in terms, right? And so explain what, you're not talking about just a kind of cold, deadpan, we'd never have any opinions or conversations, we just do what we say. Correct.

And there are appropriate ways to ask questions, respectfully appeal to an authority. It's not an unthinking obedience. But again, for a young child, if the parents are seeking to raise that child in the fear and admonition of the Lord, and that's what's happening at school, then most of the time, the authority has the child's best interest at heart, and it is good for the child to learn to submit to that authority and to obey.

And where there's conflict or where there's resistance, again, a conversation can happen at the right time and in the right context. But again, these kinds of things, too, can sound militaristic, as you said, but they can be lighthearted, too, in terms of the training. I've got a teacher that plays the name game, and the children are doing things around in class.

Maybe they're doing some independent work, and she will call out a child's name, Susie, and the child says, yes, ma'am, stops what they're doing. They give attention to the teacher and say, yes, ma'am. And then the teacher will deliver some instruction, like, go touch her head.

And then the child will go back to what they're doing. And it's almost like a Simon Says sort of game, but they're being trained, again, to respond to the authority, to their voice and to the instruction, and to obey the first time. But just a footnote on the yes, ma'am, yes, sir thing, which I'm from the South, so that just seems completely normal, and it immediately sets the roles and the rankings in the room up.

When we moved to Idaho, quite honestly, Hannah, first day at school at Ambrose, she said to the teacher, yes, ma'am. And everyone in the class looked at her like, what in the world? She's kind of brown-nosing the teacher. What's she trying to do? And I thought, this is the problem with this slide away from that, where you start getting, in some schools, you're not Mrs. Jones.

You're, you know, Mrs. Judy or whatever first name. And there's this desire to sort of be approachable and to be, you know, not this scary authority. But this is a real loss, I think.

And I love the fact that you guys retain here at Providence that there's an expectation. And additionally, the fact that we do recognize male and female when you say that. I mean, there's all these things that are kind of countercultural.

Yes, yes. And depending on where you are and what your context is, that may take a different form. But the idea is to respectfully acknowledge this person's authority.

And just as a footnote, because I want to keep us going here, but just what do you—obviously, that sets the child up for their understanding of God as authority. Correct. And if we're called to obey and submit to our Heavenly Father, the way we practice that is submitting to our earthly authorities.

Yeah, yeah. That sounds great. Yep.

Yes, sir, to God is probably a pretty good response occasionally, too. Yeah, but... Yeah, that's fine. Yeah.

We'll keep going. Okay, what's the next habit? The habit of neatness and orderliness. So, 1 Corinthians says God is not a God of disorder, but of peace.

And we want to train our children to do things in an orderly fashion and take good care of the resources that He has given them. And sometimes when they're little, these are simple resources. They don't have a lot of things.

But if it's the crayons that they're using on the table when it's time to put them away, they have a spot to be put away in. Or if it's after lunch and it's time to clean up, there's a way to do that, to restore order to the environment. And again, it's just the simplest things that over time become second nature to them.

I think it's so interesting just culturally there's such a rise, it seems, of sort of these, I don't know, influencers trying to convince you to go to minimalism. This is the new kind of discovery. It's like how freeing it could be to not have clutter everywhere in your home.

And I see that in our schools. Not in our schools, but a lot of schools that I'm in that are not maybe classical or maybe with a Charlotte Mason orientation tend to be, you walk in, it's like, oh my goodness, this is certainly the progressive modern view of elementary rooms as they look like a combination of Goodwill blew up and Hobby Lobby and there's stuff hanging from the ceiling, there's primary colors. It's like I'm getting ADD just walking in here.

So there's sort of clarifying and cleaning and organizing does a lot to not only restore the soul but the classroom. It does. And one of the challenges I think as a parent, certainly as a teacher too, is that teaching the child to restore order takes more time than it would, and effort than it would if I were to just step in and do it for my daughter or for my son.

But again, the payoff and what I'm investing here is that it will bear fruit tenfold as they grow and get older. And it's obviously different children. I've got my three children.

Some are a little bit more clutter avoidance. I can say that's probably not my gift. I tend to, maybe it's my creative part of me.

So I mean there's a place where you, yeah, there's going to be just natural disorder, but there's a point too where you've crossed over and now you've just created chaos, which is not good. Right. And that order can not just be the physical environment, but it can also be just the routine and what they're responsible for.

So back to like even note-taking during a class. I mean there's an orderliness, which then helps with the attentiveness. Right.

So all these things link together. In math class, the problem needs to be written out in a particular way, in a particular direction, and then the answer is boxed. Right.

So that, again, the systemizing of that just creates a structure for the thinking too over the long

term. Yeah. And again, just to kind of footnote what I just said before, I mean this is not for those who are listening going, that just seems very stifling.

It's actually freeing. And for the creative child in math class, you still need them to have that orderliness. And then if they want to, I guess, sketch a flower next to the math problem, go for it.

But get the formula in the same order, in the same way. Yeah. Makes sense.

Well Jeff, let's take another quick break and we'll come back. We've got a couple more we want to look at. These are really good and it is interesting how they all interconnect together.

So we'll be right back after the break. Every school year tells a story. But the quieter pages often go unread.

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Well, Jeff, let's keep rolling here. We've got time for a couple more. Let's do, yeah, what's next in the best of lineup? So the habit of serving others is the next one that I wanted to highlight.

I think it is natural, just the way that we're wired as human beings to think of ourselves before we think about other people and working consciously on putting the preferences and desires and needs of others above our own is something that is really important to highlight in the home and at school. We used to play this game at home. We called it preference deference, just to play on words, but deferring my desires to the preferences of others and asking, well, what would you prefer? So when my children were young, we would talk when there was choices involved and one had a strong opinion, coach them to just ask their sibling what they would

want.

But it can take a lot of forms. In school, we have a servant leader of the day and their job is to go first in line and hold the door for the rest of the class to go out. So it can be very small and simple things that can be incorporated.

Yeah. It makes me think of a story when I was at Heritage. We had, no surprise, but some tension in the fifth grade with the girls.

I don't know what that is. It just sort of, everybody's going, fifth grade girls, something to do with hormones and seasons in life. But it was a beautiful story where the moms came together, not only prayed together, but they actually implemented along these lines an expectation for a week or two that they were to pair up and they had to serve the other person and at lunch it would flip and they'd serve back their friends.

So everything all day was, what can I do for you? What can I do for you? And just that exercise alone, it basically de-escalated the tensions and they realized they do like each other and they can get along and they're going to care about each other, not just themselves. So that's exactly the point that you're making. There's a real joy too that can come from service.

We do a lot of activities, I guess, in the school community. Parents and children in a particular grade level might get together and they might do something fun. One of the things that we did, I had a dad in my youngest son's grade organize a service outing to a food pantry locally here.

And the seven, eight-year-old boys were, they're very actively restocking shelves, greeting people as they came through the grocery store and offering to help them. And it was fun to see just the pride that they took and the joy that they had in this simple act of service that I know, again, is formative. It is.

And it's, again, it's face value. It's like, well, yeah, we're supposed to do that, but what are we doing actively in our homes and our schools to put the other person, which again is so countercultural because everything in the culture is telling you it's all about you. And in fact, the person that's probably next to you is your competitor and you need to think about what's in your own best interest.

Yes. I have to, since we're telling these stories, another one that came to my mind as you were sharing that one was of a friend who was a college, I'm sorry, a high school basketball coach and they won the state championship. And the story was later that what they did on the day before the state finals was the competitor team was back at the gym till late hours practicing.

He took his team and they went down to a soup kitchen and served meals. And you would think, well, wait a minute, you're at your state finals tomorrow. You should be practicing.

If they don't know it now, they're not going to know it, but I want to get their head in the right place. And so they went down and they served. And I don't know if it's a one-to-one corollary,

but they ended up winning the state championship because their heart was, I'm working.

So even when they hit the basketball floor, it's not about me doing the three-pointer, it's about me working with my team. So all of that integrates even into a sports context very well. It's a beautiful story.

Yeah. So, all right, let's go to the next one. So finished with the habit of working hard and doing your best.

And this one again is counter to our nature. My nature is to do as little as possible to get by. Teaching excellence and doing something to the best of one's ability takes effort.

But again, the pride and the joy that can be found in that accomplishment or achievement is a really beautiful payoff. So we talk a lot about work before play. And when kids come home from school, the first thing they want to do is play.

And maybe that is part of the built-in routine. But the big idea is that, nope, we've got certain things that we have to get done and that we're going to prioritize first. And then the me time or the play time comes later.

And as these habits are ingrained, it's amazing to see the fruit of that in a high school student who knows how to organize their time and not be cramming for an assignment late the night before because they've just neglected to study for it over the days prior. What is your recommendation to, when your kids come home, do they get to go play for a couple hours or quick snack and let's go ahead and get the homework done and move on with it? And I guess it's probably not right or wrong, but what do you do with that? Yeah, it depends, I think, on the particular context and the structure. But generally speaking, there's enough of a gap between the end of school and getting home in our family context that the break has been had.

And I've got kids that tend to hopefully get it done. And giving them that responsibility, too, to get it done, not nagging them, but putting them in charge and then letting them suffer the consequences if they haven't. And again, it is something that is really beautiful to watch them learn.

Sometimes some of them absorb it really quickly and others, it's more of a struggle, but it's a beautiful discipline. Do you think there's also an added layer of challenge, especially in our classical schools, because we do aim to challenge our students to do their best and the old rigor word comes up sometimes in classical circles, which can be good. There's a point where we overdo it and we don't need to work to the point of breaking us.

But my question for you is, is your perception as I had a school that too often we've got families that will say, well, that would be hard for me to do, therefore it's got to be hard for my child, therefore it's too much. Do you see them sort of making an excuse that they're having to memorize this long thing or they're having to do all this extra reading? It would be hard for many of us who weren't classically trained to open a great book and be able to kind of work our

way through it. So it feels like it's maybe too much.

For sure. And I think it is tempting to excuse it or say, good enough, now go along. That works for me.

But I think that too often we shortchange our children with expecting too little of them. And I found as a teacher, I was constantly amazed that my students at 13 and 14 were capable of far more than I thought. Oh, yeah.

And as the bar gets raised, they rise to it. Right. And again, over time, they'll get that sense of pride and accomplishment of what they're actually able to do.

It's a great point. I think, again, I get it. Parents are more empathetic than ever and it looks like it's struggling.

I mean, I can think of our children at various points on the K-12 journey. There were definitely some tearful nights and there's a part of me that's like, we're just gonna put you in a different school where you don't have to do all this crazy work. And it's like, boy, but look where they are now.

And had we given them that easy way out, what would have happened at their first job when they had challenges come their way? Yeah, and I think there's an important distinction too between doing your best or excellence, what excellence looks like, and overdoing it. There's a point at which it is good enough. You've put in the work that the task deserves and now you can put it down.

And depending on how the child is wired, some will probably be more prone toward laziness and others maybe more towards overwork and you have to know your children. But the principle of, no, we're gonna give it a good effort. With the attentiveness that we talked about earlier, fully engaged in the task at hand is, I think, a really important life skill.

That's great, fully engaged in the task at hand, which is such a great point. I used to always bother me a bit, I think probably still happens at Krispy Kreme and Boise, if you bring your report card in, for every A you get a donut. I'm like, well, the problem is you've got some kids that an A is no big deal and you've got other kids that worked their tail off and got a C, they ought to get the donut.

So we've got this whole skew of what even work hard even is and what part of working hard should be celebrated. It's a great point. Well, in the final few minutes, if you could just for a moment think in terms of just best encouragement to, let's start with just a group of educators that you've got many of them here in the building.

What would you say to them when it comes to habits, just a word of encouragement? Yeah, I think habits are happening all the time. Just reminder that what you do in your classrooms and the routines that you establish and the things that you expect are sending a message and be

really thoughtful and intentional about what you want the result to be. But also that they can be very, very simple.

And one thing that has been a real blessing to me being part of the school community is to realize that it's not some grand program or something complicated. It's just taking the ordinary things of life and using them intentionally towards the desired end. And so, again, teaching attentiveness can be as simple as look me in the eye and it doesn't require a curriculum or some expert tutor to do that.

It's probably what most grandmothers just naturally did back in the day anyhow. That's right. Look me in the eye before you get that cookie.

What about parents? Just a quick final word, especially if somebody's listening and maybe their kids are a little bit older and they're thinking, oh man, I didn't know about all this. And I've got some challenges going on. Is it too late? What would you say to parents? Well, I would say it's certainly never too late to work on acquiring new habits.

Probably the most powerful thing you can give to your children is how you choose to order your day. If there's a habit that, like reading God's word, like we talked about, that is important and prioritized in your life, then they will see that. So if it's not too late for you to start, it's certainly not too late for your child to start.

And just start where you are and keep it simple and slow and do one at a time. I know we've talked about a lot of them. I would pick one and say, this is gonna be our focus for a little while and just take it slow and enjoy it.

My wife always reminds me, like, you know, it's better to actually just do this new thing you've decided to do than to come in and declare, hey, everybody, we're gonna start this new thing. And then it's like, maybe better just to start the new thing. Like, well, that's interesting.

We're reading the Bible at dinner. Okay, well, let's see. Hopefully it continues on.

Exactly. Yeah. And if you get it three out of seven days... It's all good.

You didn't declare it's a seven-day deal and you failed. That's right. So good.

Jeff, thanks so much. I love, again, being just here on property with you. Thanks for the invitation to come and speak.

Thanks for the work you've done for decades now. It's amazing. And just blessings for you and the great community here.

And thanks for reminding us of these basic but essential habits. Oh, my pleasure. Good to be with you, Davey.

Thanks, Jeff. Thank you for listening to this episode of Base Camp Live. Be sure to check out our

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