

BCL ep380 Forming Attention in an Age of Distraction with Tami Peterson

We all feel it living in this modern moment. We're in a world where attention is constantly being demanded from us. Even when we try to set boundaries around technology and scheduling, the pace of modern life makes it difficult to focus.

We certainly feel that as adults, and most certainly it's happening to our children. It's really true, what we pay attention to is what we become. As parents and educators and leaders, the real question is, are we forming students who can focus their attention and their habits and affections on what matters most.

Join us for this episode of Basecamp Live. Mountains, we all face them as we seek to influence the next generation. Get equipped to conquer the challenges, some at the peak, and shape exceptionally thoughtful, compassionate, and flourishing human beings.

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

Welcome to another episode of Basecamp Live. Davies Owens on the journey with you of raising up the next generation. You hear me say it every week.

Thank you for listening. Thank you for reaching out into Basecamp Live. Love to hear from you and what is on your mind.

You are part of a huge crowd of growing people who are coming together around the country, around the world, and starting schools and raising up the next generation. In this episode, I want to say a special shout out to John Bryant, head of school at Harbor Christian Academy in Houston, Texas. John, thank you for being a part of the Basecamp Live and Zipcast community, as well as Tom Bradshaw, head of school at Cedar Tree Classical Christian School there in Ridgefield, Washington.

We really appreciate your partnership and are so grateful to have you with us for this very important episode where we're talking about something that we all feel and live with every single day. I always think of Neil Postman's great book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. That came out, I don't know, 30 plus years ago.

It was such a significant book because he brought to light the reality that for so much of human history, we've lived basically in quiet isolation from everything else that's happening around the world. He talked about, in the beginning of the book, a small town in Kansas and how they were so upended by the telegraph when it came. All of a sudden now, the whole town is buzzing about the hotel fire in New York, which up until then really had no relevance to them.

It probably didn't even matter how much more we think of where we are today with just, I don't even know, 10,000 times that amount of distraction and noise and luring of our attention. It's so important if we're going to raise up a generation who can focus that we can do so with intentionality. That's why I'm so glad to have Tammy Peterson back joining us again.

Tammy is no stranger to Base Camp Live. She's been on many times. As you know, she is the founder and CEO of Life Architects Coaching.

She does an amazing job of consulting and coaching with young people and adults as they think about this idea of vocational discipleship. What is it that God has called them to do? How has God uniquely wired their aptitude, their abilities? Her insights today on attention are incredibly valuable. Tammy Peterson holds an undergraduate degree in Christian education from Ozarks Christian College and a master's in leadership theology and society from Regents College.

She brings a wealth of wisdom and experience. Before we jump into this conversation, as always, I want to say thank you to our partners, our sponsors, folks who are on the journey with us like Wilson Hill Academy and the Herzog Foundation and Robert Littlejohn and Chuck Evans and their great book, *Wisdom and Eloquence for Parents*. Of course, our own Zipcast, which is really a partner to us here at Base Camp Live.

It's part of my daily work, my calling, really, to come alongside schools and help figure out how can we do a better job of partnering with each other as the church, ultimately, but the family and the school with just basic communication. One of the things you may not be aware of, but our amazing team who, by the way, have about eight people that work with me, I've got two of our client services team that are actually graduates of classical Christian schools. They do an amazing job of having conversations every day with school leaders, just talking through their school communication strategy.

How well is the email working? How well is the newsletters working? How about the events? How might Zipcast help amplify all of that? We're here to help. Check us out, zipcast.media. It's just a free, personalized, one-on-one call with our team. I'm confident that it will be helpful and encouraging to you.

Without further ado, here is my conversation with Tammy Peterson. Tammy, welcome back to Base Camp Live. Thanks, Davies.

Love to be here. Great conversation today about attention. I know.

I'm so excited about this topic because everybody immediately goes, yeah, we're having trouble with that out there in the world today. I was talking to my daughter, Hannah, recently, and she had cited some statistics that were looking at just the changes in the way movie companies are producing modern movies because the old hour-and-a-half, two-hour movie is challenging for a lot of young people today. In fact, they're having to build movies, this article she was mentioning

to me, around having the plot line repeated multiple times because the assumption is you're actually on your phone while you're watching the movie.

For most of us, to even go back to a movie from even the 80s or before, you used to have all those introductions and all of the produced by and review all of that to get in. It's like, come on, let's go, let's go. I think we all agree.

Talk about the challenge of attention today. What are you seeing? Well, of course, I work with young adults mainly. What I see is what we're seeing in the classroom where attention spans are shrinking, but where I see the most impact is the fact that we just have so many inputs available to us.

The idea that we can look at social media, news media, entertainment, anything we want on our phone, and it is created to capture our attention. It's not necessarily our fault that we don't have long attention spans. Everything is conspiring against us to really captivate us, which I think is exactly the right word, being captivated, which is an idea about capturing us, capturing our attention.

Attention really is our most valuable resource right now. We even speak about it in economic terms. We pay attention, or we give attention, or we divide our attention.

There's all these ways that we even talk about our attention as a commodity, this thing that we own, but seems more and more like other people own it. Well, even the modern value of multitasking, it seems like the science is suggesting that's really a fallacy too. You can only do so many things at once.

You're right with so many inputs, then you're even more divided in terms of what you can singularly focus on. It makes it very difficult to be single-minded in this current moment. Yeah.

Our society is just set up for it, business in particular, of course, is always maximizing their revenue. That's the goal of having a business. We all work on that.

The reality is part of what we don't know anymore is we don't really know how we get people's attention because there are so many inputs in our life. Is it social media? Where are you finding us? Where do you see the things that you pay attention to? Where do you hear about it? Is it on your favorite football station? We're in the middle of March Madness. Are you watching basketball and you see an ad for something? You can click on a QR code.

Where are people finding us? Really and truly advertising is maximizing their presence because they don't actually know where you're finding us. Even though we have all these metrics about how people get to us, it's not really known where they first hear about us, where people come to us as an idea. A young parent looking at a school might hear about a school from friends and then they see a billboard.

There's all these advertising things trying to capture our attention and hold it for as long as they can because, obviously, in the next 10 seconds, we're going to have something else captivate us. That's really the issue. 20 years ago, 30 years ago, there's always been marketing people that were after us, if you will, to gain our attention.

But there's something even more dangerous going on. There's obviously a lot of legal action being taken right now. Med is being drug into court around a lot of what they've done.

As far as the addictive nature, Claire Morrell in her book, *The Tech Exit*, talks about extensively. You're really dealing with something that's firing your cortisol and your dopamine. This is chemically addicting.

It's like dumping crack cocaine on a population of people. It's even worse than just, there's a lot going on, a lot of razzle-dazzle and spending things to pay attention to. It's literally chemically changing.

Talk about it because this is, again, the level of challenge we're dealing with when it comes to attention and focus. Yeah, we know in education that what you pay attention to over and over again, what you review, what you go back to, what you embed in your mind builds those synapses in our brain to remember it and to think about it more. If you think about a childhood where there was outdoor play and school, those are the two choices.

They didn't have a TV, didn't have a radio way back in the years gone by. Sitting in a classroom might be interesting because it's the most information you have. It's the biggest input you have, reading a book or listening to a teacher.

The more they repeated things, the more the student then could remember them. We see that in the early years of education. Students come back.

Curriculums are cyclical and they're spiraled. You come back to those ideas again and again and again to build that brain that is interconnected. Education isn't the only place that uses that.

As we began to try to get children's attention, which is relatively new, the truth is that marketers weren't paying attention to children for a long time. They were paying attention to wage earners, people who actually had money. Right now, especially in the West, children have lots of money, especially teens and preteens have a lot of money to spend.

Attention becomes this thing that is very valuable in different segments of the population. If you're trying to reach a preteen or a teenager, there's multiple inputs that they could be paying attention to. None of them are as probably boring as sitting in a classroom listening to a teacher talk about something.

Teachers trying to compete with that are kind of in a losing battle, but it's not the end of it

because we also know that attention and interest and affection is built through relationships. Part of social attention, the idea that some person is important to us, is a key to our marketing right now. If one of our pop stars says, oh, I love this brand, we have this social attention toward them.

We might not even know them in person. In fact, we don't know them, but the social attention, the idea that I am aligned with this person who is popular, becomes very meaningful for preteens and teens. They are a part of that tribe or that group of people that love this celebrity.

Teachers take hope that you can have social attention, not by being cool like a pop star, but paying attention to students. That is one of the things that we know that the marketers are trying to make us think that they're always thinking about us. This is your brand.

This is the way you are going to find your meaning in life. And so they're trying to crack the code of a meaningful mentor. How can we be the person or the entity that students turn to for not only information or a product, but actually for making meaning, for finding their identity? Your time is extremely important to me.

I want to just focus on this for a second because I think those who are in a world of education, as we are, have come to understand education is not just reading, writing, arithmetic. It's literally the formation of our loves, our affections, as you were talking about. Charlotte Mason says nine out of 10 things are the formation of habits.

So really, the habit of attending and attending to things that are true, good, and beautiful is at the core of what a classical education is. And therefore, we have to be concerned about how well attention is being regulated in our lives. And ultimately, to the point you were making, is if we're going to win against big tech algorithms giving distractions, we've got to have something more beautiful and more enticing and something that we come back to over and over.

When I think of it in a food context, it's like if you bring your kids up with Froot Loops all the time, they're going to think Froot Loops are normal and tasty. And if you all of a sudden introduce broccoli, they're going to probably think that's kind of gross. If you always introduce broccoli and there was a habit, you're shaping them towards that greater and more important affection.

It seems like it's a similar thing with attention, would you say? Yeah, absolutely. And one of the things that's true about this is we actually form our children's loves through our loves. If we love listening to a particular kind of music, I hear it all the time.

How did you get started in classical music or whatever? They love, you know, classic rock, either. Both of those things. Kids are started because their dad loved it or their mom loved it, or it was played in their childhood home and they have memories.

They even have memories of the skip in the old album that their parents might be playing. And they're just like, oh, I don't think I've ever heard that song without a skip right there. So it's this

very interesting habitual pattern of attention by adults before their children.

Yeah, I mean, we're definitely, the whole idea of we're sheep, we follow, we become like those who we are around. And so, if we're in an environment where sitting still and listening to a book being read or having a long form conversation is normative, then that's who we will become. I don't know if you saw a while back, I remember reading that the Pope about a year and a half, two years ago, declared that no homily was to be longer than nine minutes long in any Catholic church because the reality was the modern listener today really can't tolerate something that goes into that longer form.

And I think that's a, it's kind of sad on the one hand. On the other hand, it is kind of where we're at. So I want to take a break in a second and come back, because I'm really curious, given that this is the kind of ADD moment that the world is in, how do we begin to, what are some principles that we can think about to begin to kind of guide us back into a little bit more of a focused existence that we really need to be a part of, where we could actually hear a 20 minute sermon and pay attention to the whole thing.

It'd be amazing. So, all right, let's take a break. We'll come right back.

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 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. Tammy, we could go on and on citing examples from the Pope to others in terms of just the modern moment we're in.

It's interesting with Zipcast. When we launched two-and-a-half years ago, I had someone at a classical conference come up and just said, this Zipcast thing just kind of makes me sad. I was like, oh, gosh, that's not what I want to hear.

And they said, well, you're just affirming what we know to be the case, which is we've been producing long-form podcasts. We put out these big articles on the virtue of prudence or something, and then people don't really read it. And I said, well, you kind of have to meet people in the moment and then train the habit to go deeper.

So maybe give them a two-minute snippet of a great book excerpt, and then get them excited about going and learning a little bit more and going deeper. But this has been around for years. I think the stats in 78% of movies that people watch, they watch because they first saw the trailer.

And so it's like on the one hand accusing the people who make the trailer of killing the movies. It's like, no, no, the trailer got you excited. So talk a little about these principles of we do need to meet people where they're at, but we also need to move them to form deeper habits of attending well.

What does that look like today? Well, I'd love to go back to a couple stories. One is the story of Adam and Eve in the garden, which is kind of a favorite story for everyone to talk about, about almost anything. But when you think about attention, I don't know that I'd ever thought about this before, but when Adam and Eve were in the garden, God had told them what to pay attention to, told them to pay attention to me, God, each other, the work that you have to do, pay attention to those things.

And then they had a visitor in the garden, of course, in the form of the serpent, and he brings an alternative to them. And he says, what I'd like you to pay attention to is not the goodness of the garden and all of the beautiful trees and every fruit of the garden that you can eat. I want you to pay attention to something else.

I want you to pay attention to your desire for the one thing God has said you can't have. And I want you to pay attention to your finitude, the things you can't be and do. And I want you to pay attention to your limits.

And then I want you to actually pay really close attention to what God said about that. Did he really say that you can't do these things? You can't eat the fruit of this tree? And actually, the question was asked a little differently. And it feels very much like, like marketing to me, you know,

did he say you couldn't eat any of these fruits? And, you know, he was like, Oh, no, no, no, no, just this one.

And, and even framing it that way is an interesting attention idea. It's like putting all the things that your child can have in front of them, and then say, Oh, and don't pay attention to this thing under this blanket, because it's something you can't have. It's almost the most enticing way.

Yes, for them to have it. Our human nature, absolutely. So, they're very interested, of course, and the fall happens.

And one of the things that we've been doing ever since then is making meaning of that. And so, one of the things that's interesting is we can, we can all look at that story and other stories and mark modern marketing, and say, what is the meaning of it. And one of the things that's interesting about AI, because I am doing a deep dive on AI, and we'll talk more and more about that this year, but is that AI doesn't have a real way of making meaning, it only has a way of looking at all of the inputs it has, and creating a pathway through it that comes to some sort of choice that it's making.

And as it gets more as machine learning grows, it's going to do that. And we'll talk more about that this year. But one of the things C.S. Lewis has this great quote, and I absolutely love it.

He says, reason is the natural organ of truth. But imagination is the organ of meaning. We actually have to look at the garden story with our imagination and say, okay, what does it mean for God to say the things he said? What does it mean for Adam and Eve to respond in the way they responded? What does it mean for the serpent? What does it mean for humanity? You know, the meaning making of it.

God helps us with that, of course, because he gives us the meaning behind all the things that happen. But for the most part, what modern advertising and all the inputs we have is trying to do is make meaning of our lives for us. And so the fact that you don't have this new thing means that you're a loser.

The fact that you don't want something even means that you're not really the kind of person that should be in leadership or whatever. I mean, there's so many ideas out there that the world tries to make meaning for us. And I think what a lesson from the Garden of Eden that we can go, okay, we need to pay attention to things a little more carefully.

Yeah, it's a great, it's a great reminder, because without a vision that people perish, without a sense of something greater and more important in one's life, you default to whatever the default setting is. And that's our, you know, our culture today. I think this working statistics, 86% of young people today, when you ask what they want to be, want to be social media influencers, and I think 12% claim they already are.

And so we've created, you know, we've created a norm that is really not something we want to aspire to. And yet, unless we speak into that with something more beautiful, more visionary, why should we be surprised otherwise? And that's, I mean, again, it's not a new problem in that sense, from what you're describing all the way back to the garden. Yeah.

Yeah. Well, and it's absolutely easy to influence someone to consume something. If you think about the garden, I mean, how easy is it to entice someone to look at something good, true and beautiful, which the fruit was in that moment, it was inherently good, true and beautiful and say, don't you desire that? It wasn't the actual eating that did something, it was the actual decision to do it.

And so part of the meaning making, and I think that's, and we can actually look at our own lives as adults and think through this a little ourselves. So AI is a part of our life now, if you use your GPS, or you use your, you use Google or any in your Gmail, you're going to have AI trying to leak into the work you're doing and help you get better at what you're doing. And so, so really, and truly, AI is a response to a life that we can't live without it.

So we get too many emails. So we need an AI to actually look at our emails and say, oh, you don't need to look at this one. And it makes meaning for us.

It says this is not a meaningful thing. Now we train it, but in the in the early days of training, we get a lot more mistakes, AI put something in our primary email box that shouldn't be there. And we say, oh, no, no, let's move it over here.

That's an update. And I don't need those in this in this box. But the truth is, is that we have too much information in general.

And so we believe as humans, that we're incapable of wading through that because it's not efficient. And the question is, like, I remember a day when there was no email or a limited email. And we just sort of let our inboxes be open to everyone.

Like, we have an email address, send it to us. And that is a little bit like what our children are facing is their email, and their inboxes are open to everyone. Things just show up in front of them.

And so we needed AI to sort it all out. And then in the world of college admissions, that's another area that I just look at and say, yeah, technology is not our friend. It's a very simple process of applying to college has become really, really complex, partially because of technology.

Before the days of the common app, a person would have to write their name 10 times if they were applying to a college to 10 colleges. Now they just have to say, yes, I want to send this application to this college. So we had this amazing influx of data into the college's admissions office.

And so they needed ways to wade through all the things that they were getting in their inboxes. And they turned to technology. So we have all these technological solutions for the college admissions process.

We're trying to figure out who's a qualified student, who, you know, there are very few data points that are truly pure data points about, you know, is that can the student actually pass the math class? Like, we're just trying to figure out is college for you. And it's interesting because the colleges had so many more applications, we began to think that some colleges were so much better than others, because they had so many applications, and they only could take a few students comparatively. So those became a scarce resource.

And in the world of humans, a scarce resource is desirable. If there isn't very much of it, we want some of it. And so it wasn't necessarily that more students were qualified, it was probably a similar amount of students that were qualified, but the limits were becoming smaller.

So we had a huge pool of applications, still only 1500 students were going to be there. And we're trying to figure out who deserves to be there, or who is capable or qualified to be part of that. And the more applications they got, they received, the more elite it became.

And then social media and the news, just sort of maximized the volume of that. And these are the only 30 schools that are worth going to. And it just became this, you know, we call them highly rejected colleges for a reason, you know, they accept 9% of their applicants.

And, and they work very, very hard to get that 9%, based on a whole bunch of levers. And so, so we created a scarcity in that market that wasn't real. You know, people believe something about those campuses, without really knowing what meaning was made on those campuses.

It wasn't like we were sending them off to just be taught knowledge. We were sending them off to be formed and forge convictions about their lives. It's an interesting vantage point you have working with students and helping them with their college and vocational decisions.

And you realize that attention isn't just swirling things and distractions. It's that at a surface level, it's also just, it's also a lack of attention of things that matter. And so, you know, what does it mean to be a wealth, well fit for a particular college? It's hard to know that from the colleges standpoint, or from the students standpoint.

So you're left with this sort of veneer of superficial things that may get you or may not get you through this, you know, artificial system. So it's a very, it's very broken in that sense. And I can, you're right, it's all a spiraling effect where the overflow of these applications causes the colleges now to have to find digital non-human solutions to even evaluate students, which then creates, so the whole thing is broken in that sense.

So yeah, that's a, it's interesting how attention is a part of the problem colleges are having.

Absolutely. Yeah.

Well, let's, I want to take a break and come back because folks are like, well, gosh, you're, you're, y'all have really only reminded us of this challenging world we live in. There are some really good solutions. And one of the things I love about the work you're doing and that so many of our classical Christian schools are doing is really re taking ground back in terms of reforming the habit of attentiveness and of life lived with intentionality and purpose.

And even things like boredom can be good, bringing all those things back, but at the same time, young people chart their course in life, which is so much what you do. I'd love to get your thoughts and ways we can regain some attention. Practically.

We'll be right back after the break. Every school year tells a story, but the quieter pages often go unread. A science experiment that sparks wonder, a teacher guiding perseverance, moments parents long to hear.

Zipcast brings those stories to light. Each 10 to 12 minute episode blends local updates from your school with wisdom from national parenting and education experts that addresses the questions parents long to have answered. Nearly 100 schools are using Zipcast this year and fall or winter can be the perfect time to begin.

Learn more at zipcast.media. Zipcast, encouraging you on the go with what you need to know. Hi there, classical Christian parents, students, and teachers. This is Robert Littlejohn, co-author with Charles Evans of *Wisdom and Eloquence, a Christian Paradigm for Classical Learning*, published by Crossway Books.

We want you to know about our new book with well-known family counselor Keith McCurdy, published by Classical Academic Press. The book is titled *Wisdom and Eloquence for Parents, How Classical Christian Education Can Transform Your Children, Your Family, and the World*. We have written this shorter, parent-focused book specifically as it and parent education resource for schools and families.

We are excited to be proud sponsors of Zipcast and Base Camp Live, and we hope you are enjoying these two great resources for classical learning as much as we are. And we would invite you to visit our website, wisdomandeloquence.org, to explore the various services offered by the authors of *Wisdom and Eloquence for Parents*, and to let us know how we can best serve you. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

So Tammy, before we move beyond colleges, which you were giving some really concerning insights into just the state of go try and apply today to college and see how that works out, what can someone do with regard to college application in a very distracted environment? You know, one of the things that we do in vocational discipleship is we talk about how the importance of people, ironically, is we can do a lot with AI. And I've run some things on social media about what

I can help you with in the college process, because there is so much data that we can't wade through it all. But one of the things, one of my students, I was at a classical Christian school this spring, working with some students, and one of the students, I just asked him how he made his college list, because we had made a list, and he had added a couple things to it.

And I asked him, and he had made a decision already about where he was going to go. And I said, so, you know, how did you come up with all of that? He said, well, you know, one of the things I did is I had some, I had some secular schools on my list and some Christian schools on my list. So I just decided to talk to people who had had those experiences.

So I talked to a lot of the faculty on my campus and said, hey, where did you go to school? And they told them and then they asked questions about, well, okay, when you were there, what was it like? And now, 10 years or 15 years out of college, what's it like now? How did college impact you? And what he said was really amazing is he just said, it was overly abundant to him that the people that went to a small Christian college, where they were in line with the mission, where it was a good fit, Christian and educationally, still had contact with professors and people they went to college with. Some of their college friends were their best friends, they were in their wedding, and they still talk to them this many years out. And many of the experiences that he heard about big research universities, the ones that, you know, everyone just kind of points to and go, why wouldn't you go there? Their actual lived experience on those campuses was formative in a negative way.

They became more competitive in a negative sense, where they had to protect what they were doing, or it might get damaged in the research lab. They talked about how the people were not necessarily accommodating to them for the things that they needed, friendship wise, you know, they didn't have privacy in their dorm room, they didn't have, there was just a whole bunch of data points that he kept saying, and this person said this. And so he did his own research about with people he knew about finding wisdom in making the choice.

Because discernment is one of those things that we know people need, but we don't really train it. So how do you make a decision about college? And it's one of the things we talk about quite frequently with parents and their students, is that you make decisions all the time, every day as an adult, how do you make those? You need to share with your child, what are the data points you pay attention to? What are the data points you ignore? What is the information? Where do you get your information from? And so that's one of the areas that I think is really important in the college process, is really talking to people, especially recent graduates, you know, you can always talk to someone who went to a school 40 years ago, and it's a completely different story, but someone who was there 10 years ago, five years ago, graduated, they're still in their 20s, they may be early 30s in their first job, getting some information about what their experience was, and what was most important to them. And if they were going to do it again, what would they pay attention to? And I we train kids how to read the college website, you know, you go up and you know, what's on the website is a lot of what they value.

And so if you're looking at the website going, I don't know if I value these things, that's a good indicator that that school may not be for you. It's a it's a really, again, sometimes it's the basics we all need to be reminded of. And it's just our who's training our child to know what to pay attention to in every aspect of life.

And whether certainly with colleges, is it based on I don't know, I like their mascot, and my neighbor, friend went there, and they love whatever. I mean, sometimes, that's about what the decision comes down to. And we've not taught them to whether it's what food to eat, or who to choose as our friend, like we have to train them in the art of discernment, which is very much linked to our ability to have good attention, because otherwise, we're going to, you know, chase the latest and the loudest around all the time.

So yeah. And that I mean, it really, it really does bring us to our responsibility as good leaders and mentors and parents is, if you're doing something that you're telling your child not to do, then unfortunately, what you're doing is speaking louder than what you're saying. And so doing always is what kids learn from.

So if you have, if you have friends over, and you have a raging debate about something that is, that is an important issue for the people that you're, you're in this conversation with, and yet you're still kind and respectful to them. And you can disagree, but you are looking at the nuances and digging deeper into why do you think this is true? What is it about that that you think is wrong or right? It's one of those areas that we, you know, really public discourse, even in our home, is so uncomfortable for us, unless we all agree. It's like, we're only gonna have people over that we can, we can agree with.

And I'm like, how do we teach our kids how to have a good, encouraging and interesting, you know, back to what do we pay attention to? Interesting discussion about some of the biggest topics today. I mean, I think we're just all afraid to bring something up that might be contentious. And our kids are like, oh, no, now what do we do? Especially our young adults, when we're talking about, we talk a lot in the classical movement about forming affections.

And the way we move that into the young adult world is we begin to forge convictions. So you loved certain things when you were a child, and now you're forging, which takes work. If you've ever seen someone working at a forge, they are sweating, and it's a lot of muscle, and you're just going at it.

Well, you're forging a conviction, you're forging what you actually believe about something. And when the Bible talks about iron sharpening iron, that is a form of forging a conviction. I don't agree with you.

Here's a conversation we can have. Let's have some friction in this conversation. And in our relationship, we're so afraid of friction.

And that's the lie of AI and a lot of technology is we get a frictionless life. And I just want to say, yay for friction, it's good for us, it creates some heat, might even create some fire. And we then can know exactly what we believe and what those around us believe.

And that's such a great practical point. And what I mean, everyone listening to this can think of a family dinner or a conversation where just because the world's complicated, and everybody doesn't agree, but we're in a cancel culture. So if all our students have paid attention to is people canceling and slandering each other and then running out the door, and now you're trying to have a civil discourse, what have you paid attention to? And so it is a formation of what is normative and what is acceptable and all of these basic things.

I mean, I think sometimes it's as simple as just teaching our children how to greet adults. I mean, these basic things that grandma would have been, let me introduce my daughter to you, Mr. Jones, and hello, Mr. Jones, or whatever, as opposed to those basic common practices that I think we've lost just in our hyper distracted world. So what are some other things? I know we have a ton of time, but I want to just, for families, as you talk to them, what are some other just best practices in terms of helping guide your children to be more attentive to the right things? Mm-hmm.

Yeah, I think paying attention to what they're paying attention to. I told a mom a few weeks ago that she needed to play her son's video game with him. And she said, oh, he'd never let me.

And I was like, well, that's an interesting statement. What do you mean by that? He'd never let me. Like your child cannot let you do something.

Well, I mean, that was what she kind of came up with. She's like, hmm. And she said, well, I'd be terrible at it.

And I said, oh, of course you would be, because you don't practice this thing, and he does. And even in that, there's a conversation. And so part of helping your child learn to love something is be a part of their life.

And I can't tell you how many times my great nephew has beaten me in Mario Kart, because he does it more often than I do. And I'm pretty sure he didn't play video games when I was a little kid. And so it's interesting to be a part of a child's world where, and we talk about play, play is so important in our lives, but children's play is not adults play.

So when you play a game with your kid, like Chutes and Ladders or Monopoly or something, you're playing a board game with them. It can be not fun for an adult to play a game. Or you might be the kind of person that is eternally a child and you just love playing, and that's great.

But your children, play is important for them because they work out stuff while they're playing. And so you playing with them in a thing that they are playing that you want to know more about, it

honors the fact that they really like it, but it also gives you information about what they're paying attention to. And of course, there's so many things, and there's lots of other people that talk about this, but you don't allow a kid to play with friends that they don't know online.

There's a whole bunch of online things that you would talk about, but just knowing what the game is like and why they like it, like paying attention to, why does your child like this thing? What are they watching? What are they reading? So are you offloading meaning making to your children? I was on a flight a couple of weeks ago, and I was watching Bluey, which I hadn't seen, but I'd heard a lot about. So I was like, I'm just going to watch this. I'm going to watch a few things of these.

And I was like, well, this is a fascinating little short, like you were talking about, short attention span show. And I watched like three or four of them and went, well, there wasn't anything in that that I would have said was objectionable. Now I haven't watched them all, but I went, this is a very interesting family oriented kind of conversation around what's going on in the world and a great way to have a conversation with young children to say, what do you think about that? And you don't have to watch a half an hour of something.

You can watch, I don't even know, they're eight minutes or something of Bluey that you can have that great conversation with. But you're picking up on something important. It's not only the content where there are expletives in it, but it's also just, this is Marshall McLuhan talked to you in the sixties about the medium is the message.

I mean, the very fact that you're getting something that's coming, flickering that fast at you, that every scene change is an eighth of a second. That becomes what your children are paying attention to, which changes their attention. And that's why I hear more and more from teachers that it's so difficult to run classical classrooms today, especially, well, all ages, but grammar school kids that come in and they've been on Bluey for hours and they can't quite sit through someone reading the Chronicles of Narnia to them because they're ready for the next clown to pop up or the razzle-dazzle thing.

And so we're forming our kids to love things that are not always lovable or lovely because we're not paying attention to ourselves. So that's really good advice. And again, it's not meant to lay undue burden on parents, but I think that's part of the reality is we are, you know, another quote we often hear things that's along the lines of, you know, you're the average of the five people you hang out with.

So are the five major influences. So you will become like whoever these people are virtual or in person. So it's a kind of basic human principle, but really important when it comes to attention.

Yeah. Well, and putting something in front of our children to look at without us is offloading their formation. We're offloading our responsibility as parents.

Instead of saying here, come and help me do the laundry. I mean, there's so much in this type of conversation that we don't have time for, but the idea that work is meaningful in the home and children learn to be, to have confidence and feel competent when they're young by the parent, the family needing them to actually do work and not just play. And so we, many times people will school is the play is the kids learning.

I'm like, no, play is play. Don't, don't conflate that. Learning is learning.

Play is play. Work is work. Their play is like your play.

You know, don't, don't think you're out on the golf course, uh, only doing work. You're actually playing out there too. And so, um, so some, some of the conversations we have with parents are really important just around what are we actually doing with our children? That's a really good point, Tammy.

Well, there's so many more things we can talk about on this topic. And I know we'll have you back on and we'll continue as we look at other implications in our modern distracted culture of what's happening with attention and how do we protect our child's attention? How do we form them to love the things that are true, true, good and beautiful and continue to, uh, re regain really our humanity in this moment. It's such a, it's such a challenge that we just can't take for granted.

And I'm so grateful for the work that you do. And, um, I know there's a lot more resources that you have available. Anything that you want to mention by way of resources or connections back to you? Well, we, we're continuing to write on our blogs and on our blog.

And of course that's at lifearchitectscoaching.com and you can get, um, all the links to past Base Camp Live resources and things like that on that website. And, um, we're, we're always looking for new schools to talk to and new people to help. And so feel free to reach out to us on lifearchitectscoaching.com. Sounds great, Tammy.

Thanks so much. Can't wait to continue the conversation with you again in the future. Yeah.

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