

Intentional Parenting Conversations

WEEK 4 / ECOSYSTEM /

[INTRO]

Welcome.

Settle for a moment.

Take a deep breath in and slowly let it out.

As some of us are just transitioning from bedtimes, dishes, work, hard conversations, let's settle in to this time....

As we have done each week, here is a reminder:

In our parenting...

We cannot fully take the blame or the credit.

God gives the growth.

In your parenting you cannot fully take the blame or the credit.

God gives the growth.

So, week 4. Well done, friends.

We started thinking about the soil our parenting grows from.

And we asked the question—
what do we want to see grow?

What is the goal of your parenting?
What are the values that I give up a lot to maintain?

We then talked about fears in parenting and how encouragement is most meaningful when it speaks to our fears. Becoming someone who is good at encouragement means becoming acquainted not only with your own fears and the encouragement you need but also your child's fears and the encouragement they need.

Last week, we looked at some of our controlling instincts when it comes to discipline and some habits that help to move towards care in our discipline.

Our discipline is meant to align not just with our short term needs for calm, but the goal of our parenting, the fruitful growth in our kids lives. We talked about “the suckers” that grow up in our lives and our family life

that suck up nutrients and energy that would otherwise go toward fruitful growth.

Suckers make a plant look productive but don't actually help with fruitful growth.

We had some space this past week to ask what habits or activities need pruning in our lives in order to bear fruit.

What are the things that draw life and energy away from fruitful growth in your life? And your kids life?

So as we get ready to talk more about what fruitful growth looks like by thinking more holistically about the ecosystem— the environment of our development and our child's development— I want to just pause first and go to break out rooms. Let's go for 10 minutes here on what "suckers" you identified that are drawing you and your family away from your goal and values and therefore could use some gentle pruning?

SO 10 minutes share about what suckers you are finding— in yourself, in your family life, in your child...

[BREAK OUTS]

[SHARE ONE FROM EACH GROUP]

OK so today, we get to talk about the trellis work of parenting.

Trellis's are these structures that support plant growth and are designed to train a plant into the way you want it to grow.

Proverbs 22:6 puts it in parenting terms as a basic principle —

Train up a child in the way he or she should go, and even when he or she is old he will not depart from it.

This is one of those tru-isms.

We have a very formative role in our kids life.

We all have trellis.

We all have habits of speech.

We all have habits and even liturgies of how we interact with each other in the morning when we wake up, in what we put on in the morning commute, in how we come home, in how we gather for dinner or don't, even when you don't gather for dinner that is a

formative liturgy, how we clean up, how we go to bed...

There's a monk who thinking about monastic life said —

“Doing good must be taught just like everything else... it is not difficult to train. Opportunities occur every minute. One has only to use them.”

I think he's being simple about it but I think he's right.

So let's take a second now a few moments to reflect on the opportunities in your day that you might not recognize yet:

Start with the way you wake up— you personally and then your family....

What's happening?

What is this forming?

What is a possible habit?

What is a possible fruit to cultivate?

Now let's go to the morning commute:

What's happening?

What is this forming?

What is a possible habit?

What is a possible fruit to cultivate?

Now let's go to how you arrive back home with your kids.

What's happening?

What is this forming?

What is a possible habit?

What is a possible fruit to cultivate?

Now let's go to dinner—

What's happening?

What is this forming?

What is a possible habit?

What is a possible fruit to cultivate?

Now let's go to clean up—

What's happening?

What is this forming?

What is a possible habit?

What is a possible fruit to cultivate?

Now bedtime— for you if you are a parent for teens,
for your kids if you are going to bed after them....

What's happening?

What is this forming?

What is a possible habit?

What is a possible fruit to cultivate?

Now Sundays—

What's happening?

What is this forming?

What is a possible habit?

What is a possible fruit to cultivate?

[invite sharing any reflections]

We have a whole family ecosystem of opportunities
that form the growth of each person involved, and it
will affect them even when they are old. Proverbs 22
is right.

How many of you have seen the progressive insurance commercials on becoming your parents—Parentamorphosis is what it's called.

They feature a Parenta-Life Coach Dr. Rick who is on a mission to save you from turning into your parents.

They're gold.

One of them is called, "Remember not everyone needs your help."

And it's a guy in the grocery check out line and he tells the grocery bagger to remember to put the heavy things on the bottom.

Dr Rick says, remember let him do his job.

As parents we are forming our kids in a way that they will have a hard time departing from.

For good or worse.

So how do we take steps so that it's good that is what's there for our kids when they are old?

We're gonna take a look at three different frameworks that all serve in their own way as trellis to help train toward the fruitful growth...

I have asked Suzanne and Kelley Long to share frameworks they have found helpful. So we'll start with Suzanne then Kelley and then I'll share one that we use.

Suzanne — The Web in Woven

Kelley — Raising Passionate Jesus Followers the box

RJ — a triangle shaped by three points

Support

Structure

Challenge

And the triangle represents the learning or growing space. If there is too much challenge but not enough support or structure, the learning or growing space collapses. If there is not enough challenge the learning space collapses. They need to be in tension with one another to have an open learning and growing space.

Now none of these is commanded by God in the Bible.

These are just frameworks we use to help us toward the same goal of having our kids (and ourselves too) grow into people of share in God's character.

Character—

Capt. Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger III shows up in *After You Believe* as one of N. T. Wright's most compelling modern illustrations of what I think we are all hoping to see grow in our kids. And in us.

Wright points to Sully's landing of US Airways Flight 1549 — it was an emergency landing on the Hudson River after a crisis caused the plane to fail and he had to make a series of clutch decisions that saved the people's lives he was responsible for. Eventually landing safely on the Hudson River to avoid tragedy.

It was not a one-off heroic miracle,
but the result of a lifetime of practiced habits.

In a moment of crisis, you don't rise to the occasion—
you fall to the level of your formation.

Sully didn't have time to deliberate through a list of moral principles or technical manuals. Instead, he acted almost instinctively— and that instinct was deeply trained.

Wright's whole thesis is that:

The goal of the Christian life is to become the kind of people who naturally do what is good and wise and beautiful. Who choose life, in the words of Moses, because Christ *is* life.

Virtue if you want to call it that, is formed through habits and practices over time.

In critical moments, our character— not just our beliefs—determine our actions. And our character is formed over a thousand small dinner convos and bedtimes and conversations and experiences.

Sully became a real-world example of Practical wisdom— knowing what to do when there's no time to think.

And that happened through a training so that it becomes second nature— It's similar with us.

As followers of Jesus we rehearse the way of Jesus through practices (prayer, Scripture, community, liturgy) so that when life “goes down,” we respond not with panic—but with Christlike instinct.

So that what *feels* like instinct in the moment is actually the fruit of long obedience in the same direction.

That is the work of trellis.

I want to encourage you in that work as parents you are shaping your kids in a way they will go even in old age.

But this is not something we can do alone.

We need each other, communities of people to parent with.

It's true it takes a village, or in our case a church family. An church extended family that sometimes in our case at least feels like family.

So I hope this is a beginning of the conversation.

This at least gives us common language to use to have those conversations and begin them again and again as needed.

As far as next steps in the conversation
— Suzanne Case has offered to lead a group through Eugene Peterson's Like Dew Your Youth this summer.