

Intentional Parenting Conversations

WEEK 2 / FERTILIZER / LEARNING THE LANGUAGE OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND BLESSING

Welcome. Settle for a moment. Take one slow breath.

Remember: I will remind you of this each week:
Especially as some of us are just transitioning from bedtimes, dishes, work, hard conversations, let's settle into this reminder:

In our parenting: We cannot fully take the blame or the credit. God gives the growth. You cannot fully take the blame or the credit. God gives the growth.

Opening prayer.

Our hope for this time is to have an honest conversation with the commitments of **charity** and **curiosity**, and you are invited into an approach to this conversation, which is a **Cultivation Approach** —

As parents, we are companioning, guiding, and growing with our children. It's going to be messy, complicated, and seasonal in nature. A cultivation approach means that it is never too late to begin again and cultivate growth in the season ahead. Soil imagery assumes mess, seasons, waiting, and forces beyond our control.

We briefly connected in small groups to share what season we felt we were in currently, in this parenting journey, and then talked about goals in parenting. RJ invited us to consider the schema, or Jesus Creed as Scot McKnight calls it, as a goal in our parenting.

The Shema— To love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all all your soul and all your might.

You were invited to do some goals and values work, by drafting a goal and considering some of the values you hold. Maybe you resonated with the Shema as a foundation for this soil work, or perhaps something else.

[Breakout rooms] Share with your group a goal you drafted, and/or the values you hold. Did you find the Shema resonated as a foundation? Or something else? We will share out in the big group when we come back after 10 min.

This week, the theme is **Encouragement and Blessing**, which was a session I felt super excited to lead, because of the personal experiences I have had over the years, receiving so much encouragement from God directly, as well as through many of you in the All Souls community. This quote from Eugene Peterson speaks to the need for and gift of an encouraging community.

In order that we may function adequately as parents, new skills must be developed. But they are not the skills of parenting that can be packaged and purchased; they are the skills of being a person which are only developed in a community of persons who share a common task and rely on a common faith. The worshiping church provides this community.

My hope is through these conversations, our community will be a place of encouragement and skill building for each other, with the common ground of being rooted in Christ.

So let's get into it.

Tonight we will start with discussion about fear, and God's response to that fear by way of His encouragement and blessing.

The **outcome** for this evening will be creating a word or words of encouragement you can speak over your children everyday, as well as identifying a word or verse of encouragement from God for YOU, as a way to receive care and equipping from Him.

As we move forward from our goals and values work, a natural next question can be **how**? How do we achieve those outcomes we want to see in our children? Part of the response to these questions is around encouragement and blessing, which we will be talking about tonight. Next week we will be talking about the work of **Pruning: Discipline and Practicing Patient Instruction as Disciples**. These are not concepts that are incompatible or an either/or, though. They will work together.

In fact, encouragement can be a powerful tool of correction in and of itself, and it comes with ample biblical support. Encouragement helps to correct and right our behavior as adults, and it causes correction in our children. Encouragement and blessing are critical as we parent towards the goal of raising our kids to love Jesus with all of their heart and soul and strength, as we do this **soil work**.

As parents, we carry a huge responsibility which can feel very daunting. Parenting can bring much fear. It's a scary world. We are reminded in John 16 that

In this world, we will have trouble.

We know our kids will have trouble, and of course we want to prevent them from all of it. Parents need as much encouragement as our kids do.

The word **encourage** is defined as the action of giving someone support, confidence, or hope.

God's encouragement can dispel the fear we carry as parents, and in turn equip us to be agents of God's encouragement to our children in the midst of their own fears. Fears can crop up in a certain season based on age/stage and circumstances our kids are going through. Your current fear might not be the same fear you struggled with a year ago.

Scripture speaks repeatedly of fear and speaks to the emotional intensity of fear during distress.

Proverbs 29:25 says that Fear of man will prove to be a snare.

Hebrews 2:14 refers to a people who were held in slavery by fear

Psalms 55, ..fear and trembling have beset me

Psalms 34, ...he delivered me from all my fears.

Take a moment to picture yourself in a parenting moment or season that was especially difficult. What part did fear play? Maybe that feeling is close to the surface or fresh.

Next, picture your child or children during a moment or maybe an entire season that was particularly challenging, for them, for you, maybe for your entire family. Can you imagine a fear they may have been carrying in that moment, day, or period of time?

[BREAKOUTS]

We are going to break out into small groups for 10 minutes, to share with each other your common fears as a parent, and the fears you see your child carrying.

Maybe just hearing some of these fears is an encouragement, in case you might have been feeling alone in your worries and anxieties, which reminds me of that quote from earlier about community, in particular that *worshiping community* that is so vital when it comes to encouragement. Our ultimate source of encouragement is God, though, and we don't have to look further than the Bible to see that.

Did you know the phrase **Do not Fear** is repeated 365 times in the Bible??

The bible has a common pattern when it comes to fear and encouragement:

1. Fear is acknowledged
2. God speaks into the fear
3. Trust is encouraged instead of letting fear rule.

If you heard RJ's sermon a couple of weeks ago about temptation, you may remember that he spoke of how the enemy is personal in how he targets us. He targets me and you, and our kids, by fanning the flames of fear. He thrives on this.

But God is greater than the enemy in HIS personal and targeted pursuit of us and our kids.

Do not fear.

God's encouragement can grow our trust in Him, and grow our children's trust in Him. This cultivation of growth in trust in God can lead our families towards our goals and good soil infused with God.

Encouragement from God occurs over and over again in scripture through spoken word.

-Angels spoke to Mary, to the shepherds, and to Joseph. They said **Do not be afraid.**

-God spoke directly through Moses to Joshua and the people of Israel, **Do not be afraid.**

-Jesus spoke directly to his followers in John and Matthew. **Do not be afraid.**

When we speak, act, and respond from a place of fear, what might that look like behaviorally?

As parents?

In our kids?

[Waterfall chat for responses]

We may try to control. We grumble, complain, and assume the worst. And our kids do the same. It might look like non compliance, disrespect, selfishness, insecurity, or entitlement.

When we respond from a palace of fear, the enemy thrives. In our vulnerability, the enemy loves to influence us to turn away from God. This can poison the good soil we are trying to cultivate as parents.

But there is good news. God's gentle words of encouragement **dispel fear** and in turn, will do the transformation work of turning our hearts toward him.

In scripture, we see again and again how God's words of encouragement are followed by a promise of transformation. **There is a movement from fear to strength.**

Isaiah 41:10 Do not fear....I will strengthen you and help you. I will uphold you with my right hand.

Psalms 33: 4 I sought the Lord and he delivered me from all my fears

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you, do not let your hearts be troubled.

It is biblical that encouragement transforms the heart and corrects behavior.

Proverbs 4:23 tells us that everything we do flows from our heart.

When we speak words of encouragement over our children, words that have been given to us by the holy spirit, the heart work of being formed into people who are more like Jesus begins and grows.

[Encouragement and blessing work session.]

We are going to take the time left to begin work on two practical outcomes

1. Identify an encouraging word from scripture, a prayer you love, a worship song, etc. that you can say to yourself everyday, or multiple times per day, as a way to receive blessing, and re-orient your focus to God and allow Him to saturate your heart with His encouragement; that hope, support, and confidence (per the definition of the word). It should be short enough to memorize and recall easily, and speak directly to those fears you identified earlier.
2. Create a word or words of encouragement and blessing you can speak over your children each day. This may be different for each child, and could be a short prayer or verse. Think about how this blessing could target those named fears you identified in your children.

Something to consider in this work is what not to do. That list is pretty exhaustive and a lot is obvious, but this short list from authors Phil and Diane Comer offers good insight to the ways we can provoke our kids, which is a hindrance to our work of cultivating good parenting soil through encouragement and blessing.

- Speaking unkindly or harshly to them
- Comparing them to others
- Overprotecting them
- Pushing them beyond what they are capable of achieving
- Neglecting them (this refers to ignoring or not addressing behaviors or attitudes we see happening)

Examples

Fear and encouragement as a parent

- I fear the loss of influence. Social media, peers, etc are raising my child and I've lost control of her upbringing. The deeper fear is a loss of control, and a fear that God is losing His influence over her.
- I fear broken relationships. The deeper fear here is a lack of trust in God that He is at work in my relationships and is present in every interaction.

A few song verses and a scripture verse are my current go-tos for encouragement from God.

-And there is nothing to fear, nothing to fear, there is nothing to fear, nothing to fear, for I am always with you

- All Shall be Well, all shall be well. All manner of things shall be well
- The Lord is my light, my light and salvation, in God I trust.
- Jeremiah 29:11 I know the plans I have for you

Fears and encouragement for my child

-I think she carries fear around being seen and being good enough in our eyes.

I imagine her communicating these fears to God. I imagine his response. He would be amazed by her.

My encouraging words will be

-"I am amazed.....", or "It amazes me how God made you to be....."

Feel free to be aspirational in your encouragements. We put limits on ourselves and our kids that God doesn't.

Our feelings don't need to match at the time of speaking the words of blessing. As the phrases are repeated to yourself and to your kids, God will do the work of shaping your heart to view your child more like He does. This will grow good things in them and us.

We are doing the work of movement from fear to strength.

Maybe we can take some time next week to share some of the words of blessing and encouragement we created for our kids.

