Bob: There are parents who feel like they're failing when it comes to the spiritual training of their children. Christi Straub says part of the reason for that may be because they're aiming for too much.

Christi: What we needed, in an earlier season—for what we call survival mode—we just needed someone to say: “Yes, tell your journey of faith,” “Oh, I never thought to tell my kids that,”—I just didn't. In the survival, “I'm just trying to put food on your plate and make sure you had a bath sometime this week.” I'm not aiming high; but if we can just—just a few things—and you know what that does for a parent, too? It not only makes us feel so connected to our kids, but it really sets us up—like, “That really was a win.”

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Friday, December 27th. Our hosts are Dave and Ann Wilson; I'm Bob Lepine. You can find us online at FamilyLifeToday.com We'll help you today with some strategies for how you can connect, heart to heart, with your kids and deposit spiritual truth at the same time. Stay with us.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us. We are in that saddle time—you know, Christmas is over; New Year's hasn't come—a lot of people still taking days off.

Ann: Is that in the fog time, where you are not even realizing what day it is and where we are?

Dave: Yes; I mean, we ate too much at Christmas, again. [Laughter] It's two days later, and I'm still laying on the couch.

Bob: We're hoping that a lot of our listeners are going to take the next couple of days and help us take full advantage of the matching gift that—here's the deal—this gift was given to us, but we don't get it unless listeners make it possible for us to unwrap that gift. I think we mentioned last week that what started as a $2.5 million matching gift has now been increased to a $3 million matching gift.

Ann: That's amazing; are you saying that FamilyLife® needs this Christmas gift?

Bob: I'm saying that what happens in the coming year is determined by whether we are able to take full advantage of this matching gift.
Dave: And you've really got a couple of days left to do it before December 31\textsuperscript{st}. I would, not only invite you—I challenge you: “Do something at the end of this year to impact lives for eternity; and that is, ‘Make a gift to FamilyLife.’”

Bob: It’s easy to do; it will take you about three minutes. Go online at FamilyLifeToday.com—make a yearend contribution—or you can call 1-800-FL-TODAY. We've got folks taking your calls today; just say, “I want to make a donation.” Keep in mind—whatever you give is going to be matched, dollar for dollar. Help us take advantage of this matching gift. And help us help more people in the year ahead. That’s what we want to do—we want to help more husbands and wives and moms and dads in the year ahead. You make that possible with your yearend contribution, so we hope to hear from you.

Now, I want to know: “Did you guys ever, when you were home, raising your boys—did you ever do a Bible study together with your boys when you were raising them?—like where you all got together and worked through a passage or a book of the Bible?” I know you wanted, Dave, to do this.

Ann: We started a lot of them. [Laughter]

Bob: I love it!

Dave: Can we start this show over? [Laughter] That’s embarrassing. There was one time, where Ann wanted me to come home, after preaching four times on Sunday morning and then give the same sermon to our boys.

Ann: No! [Laughter]

Dave: She said, “Let’s do the same thing at night.” I'm like, “Am I going to stand in front of the fireplace?” [Laughter] You know, I'll be honest; she didn't want me to preach, but she said, “Let’s discuss the topic.” I actually thought that was a great idea. We never did it, but it was a great idea. [Laughter]

Bob: The reason I bring this up—and the folks, who are laughing with us in the studio—Josh and Christi Straub are here. Guys, welcome back to FamilyLife Today.

Josh: Thank you for having us.

Christi: We love being here!

Bob: You guys put together a Bible study that is designed for parents and kids to go through together that is all about the fruit of the Spirit; right?

Josh: That's it; yes.
Bob: Is this something—I was looking; there are a lot of words—and I'm just thinking, “How old do your kids have to be before you can sit down and do this study with them?”

Josh: Anywhere from preschool all the way up through, really, I mean—

Bob: Now, wait; preschool—they can't read this if they're in preschool.

Josh: No, no they can't. But there are activities in there, and that's the key. It's created as a parent study, where you can sit with other parents and go through it; so there's a parent study section of it.

The idea is for you to be able to apply it; so there's morning prayers, there's dinner-time stories that you can engage—tell your kids/talk to their kids about certain stories that connect the fruit of the Spirit. There's activities and games that you can do. And also, bedtime questions that you can ask, related to each of the topics/each of the fruit of the Spirit, and engage your kids in understanding what the fruit really is and what it means.

Bob: Christi, why this subject? Why did you decide to focus on Galatians 5: 22-23 as you're raising your kids?

Christi: It's one of those things that—I think, so often, our spiritual growth, even in the church, is fairly siloed; right? We have our adults in worship, we have our kids in kids' ministry; we have our youth—you know. And we're all growing, maybe, in our different ways; but we're not growing together. This is something—I mean, this is just the foundational characteristics that we want, not only in ourselves, but in our kids; so that, when the world looks at us, they see: “Wow! They are different. That's weird.”

We have been asked so many times—there's so many great studies for kids or great books for kids; there's great/amazing Bible studies for adults—but: “What if we did this together? What if there was something, where we could actually bring our kids into [our] spiritual journey?”

I think, so often, at least in our home, mom and dad might wake up and have their Bible and their journal and the kids wake up and they might see it for a second, and then they're like, “Can I watch a show?” The day starts, but they don't really know: “What do mom and dad do? What do they do when they go in big church?” I never really tell them what I'm learning, what God is teaching me, what He's showing me.

We were thinking: “How can we do this? How can we bring us all together?” Isn't it true?—when you're trying to teach your kids something, you're the one who's really learning it. “What if we did this with the fruit of the Spirit?—the basic building blocks of what a Christ-centered life looks like.”

Josh: Basic building blocks but, also, the very fruit that we will continue to try to attain throughout our entire lives.
Bob: Well, and you said, “What if this was what Christianity was known by?” For years, I thought—you go out in the mall and you ask people, “What is the fruit that we see in the lives of Christians?” The words you're going to get are: “Judgmental,” or “Intolerant,” or “Hypocritical,”—all of those. Today, the observable fruit of the Spirit, at least in the eyes of most of the people in the culture around us, is those characteristics: “Hate.”

What if, instead, you went to people and they said, “I don't agree with those folks on the stuff they believe and all that; but I've got to tell you—they're joyful,” or “They're so patient,” or “They're kind.” If these were the brand characteristics of Christianity—

Josh: —and they should be; exactly.

Christi: Amen; amen!

Bob: —that's what the Bible says. If they were, maybe the world would go, “Okay, tell me a little bit more about Jesus”; right?

Josh: And that's where the word, homegrown/cultivating—Paul uses the botanical growth for a reason. It takes time, and it's growth that's measured. The idea—it's creating a home. Even Proverbs 22:6—where it says to raise a child in the way he should go, and when they are old, they won't depart from it—it's a proverb; it's not a promise. It's really about the environment that we're raising our kids in.

If we can raise our kids in an environment, where we're growing in the Spirit—where we're growing in the fruit, and we're laying the foundation—you imagine a fruit tree. The fruit is all the way at the top; but you have to imagine then: “What's underneath in the roots, underneath the ground, and the foundation that's being laid and what comes up that trunk?” If we can create that environment: where it's being watered, and the proper nutrients are coming in/the spiritual nutrients, and we're modeling that for our kids, it leads ultimately to that fruit.

Bob: This is where we've got to remember—we're talking about the fruit of the Spirit, not the behavior modification of the parent. So yes, we can create the environment; but for love, and joy, and peace, and patience—all of this to manifest itself in your life/in your kids’ life—you can't try to manufacture this on your own. You can't try to fix your own self and say, “I'm going to be more patient tomorrow”; because the enemy will say, “I've got you on that one”; right?

Josh: Yes.

Bob: But if the Spirit is as work in your life, the Spirit is the One who brings the love, and the joy, and the peace, and the patience.

Josh: That's it. Notice we're using the word, “fruit,” and not the word, “fruits”—it's not plural; it's a plural predicate—it's fruit, but they are all interconnected; they all are together. The way that we grow in that is being connected to the Vine Jesus talks about
in John 15: “I am the Vine; you are the branches.” We are the ones—He is our source of life—we've got to be connected to Him, as you said, Bob. That's where it flows from.

**Dave:** So, in many ways, you're trying to help your children connect to the Vine. The fruit is a byproduct; it is fruit. Talk about, practically: “Have you done this with your kids?” and “What does it look like? How do you actually sit down and do this when your kids are running around, and diapers need to be changed, or whatever.”

**Ann:** —tired; you've come home from work.

**Christi:** That's exactly what we didn't want this to be—was another thing you have to do; right? We surveyed our audience, which is all young families. The biggest struggle is busyness; there's not enough time. We realized we have to do something that fits into the life—I'm talking about when you walk along the way, when we eat, when we sleep. We took those and made them really practical. It's a dinnertime story; it's a story where mom and dad are sharing something about patience—maybe it's a story about: “In my life—oh my goodness; when I was 20 years old, I had to go through this…”; and you start to tell the story.

What we find in research is that kids, who know the story of their parents/their grandparents—the family lineage of which they grow up—it doesn't have to be all positive; it's actually better if it's positive and negative, where they saw their family overcome great obstacles; where they saw them—maybe they went through the Depression, or they lost their business, or had financial struggle, they saw Mom and Dad go through really hard things, but they were overcomers. Kids, who know the story of their parents and their grandparents, are actually set up for a lifetime of self-confidence and self-efficacy.

We started to integrate dinnertime stories; we just started telling stories to our kids. And then, bedtime questions, because the bedroom is such a sacred place for a child; it's a place where they just feel safe enough to open up, where they might not—

**Ann:** They want to talk because they don't want to go to sleep.

**Christi:** Exactly. [Laughter] Anything to not fall asleep. So, “Yes, ask me another question; I will answer it now. Whereas, when you pick me up from school and you ask me how my day was, ‘It's good,’ or ‘Okay.’” [Laughter]

Whereas, at bedtime, we just integrate what we learned, as parents, or maybe we get it through a Bible study with friends from church or something. We learned about kindness, so we ask a really basic question about something: “Did you see anyone do anything kind today at school?” “Did you see any kids—is there any kid in your class, where you just think, ‘Wow! He’s really kind’?” It’s questions like that, where we’re starting to get a little bit deeper, but just through the ordinary moments of our day.
Josh: To answer your question, it doesn't look like a formal sit-down Bible study with our five- and seven-year-old in our house every single day.

Christi: My parents tried that in our family, and it didn't go well. [Laughter]

Josh: That's what I love about Moses in Deuteronomy 6. He creates this cadence; right?—talking about the commands of God and the love of God during these four key times of the day. The way Moses describes it is: when you wake in the morning—so we do morning prayers; we'll teach our kids certain prayers. Especially in the preschool years, you keep them simple, and you keep them repetitive; because kids learn by repetition. It's not like you're trying to teach them a different prayer every single day—you're going to go crazy. So, morning prayers.

Moses also talks about dinnertime/mealtimes when you sit down to eat. When you walk along the way, or today's version of that is drive time; so we have drive-time games or family activities that you can do. And then, at bedtime, that's the most intimate time of the day for kids to be able to talk.

If you can begin to use that as a cadence in your home, where you don't feel like you have to keep up with a study or you have to keep up with—because then you feel guilty for not keeping up. No; let's just create conversation and allow this environment to flourish as a place where we're talking about the commands of God.

Ann: Even as you're talking, I'm thinking, as you talk about fruit, I'm thinking of a greenhouse. We're creating a haven of growth in our homes. One of the things you have as an activity or a dinner conversation is—the parents tell how they came to faith in Jesus. What a great conversation, and I see you being very intentional. I think, as parents, if we aim at nothing, we will hit it. Many of us aren't aiming, because we're surviving. You're giving us practical tools to be intentional.

Christi: You're exactly right! The last thing parents need is more guilt and shame. I guarantee you—we are carrying around heaps of that. We need to feel—we just say: “Put it in a bowl and stir. Make it to your taste/to your family.” What we needed, in an earlier season—what we call survival mode—we just needed someone to say, “Yes, tell your journey of faith.” “Oh, I never thought to tell my kids that,”—I just didn't. In the survival, “I'm just trying to put food on your plate and make sure you had a bath sometime this week.” I'm not aiming high! [Laughter]

If we can just do a few things, you know what that does for a parent, too? It, not only makes us feel so connected to our kids, but it really sets us up—like, “That really was a win. There was a lot of losses, today;”—maybe, I lost my temper; I yelled—because we're going to do that in the midst of growing in the fruit of the Spirit; we're going to fail, epically.

Bob: I'm thinking of the high-achiever parent, who is looking at this study and going: “This is going to be the greatest six weeks of our family's life as we go through this,”
[Laughter] and "We're going to apply this every morning. We're going to be there, at the bedside, with the prayer. On the way to school, I'm going to be ready to go."

I'm thinking of other parents, who are going, “We might, over six months, get through your six sessions.” And you know what?—that's okay!

**Christi:** Amen!

**Bob:** If you spend a month, meditating on love and joy, rather than a week, there's nothing wrong with that. It may be a little more spread out than it is compact, but just being focused like that is going to be meaningful.

**Josh:** —because at the end of six weeks, you will not have accomplished, and completed, and arrived at all nine fruit of the Spirit—I promise you. [Laughter]

**Dave:** I haven't done that in 60-some years. [Laughter]

**Christi:** Exactly! And that's the thing—you may just pick it up in the middle and be like, “We need some patience around here.” You may just flip through and “Yep, that hit home. Okay guys, let's talk about this.” I hope that's the freedom that parents feel and breathe in—this is so NOT another thing that you need to do.

**Dave:** It is interesting to think—when you were walking through those four times of the day—right from Deuteronomy 6—I thought, “There are so many parents that miss, maybe, all four.”

Part of me is like, “Man, I want to hear that and go, 'Okay, this week…’” Because think about it—from 0 to 18, I have 936 weeks before they maybe leave at 18. So “This week, how am I going to rearrange my calendar to what's more important than anything else I'm doing? Will I be there at wake time?—when they wake up. Or will I be there at dinnertime?—or bedtime?—or will I be the one driving instead of my spouse?” There are dads and moms that are racing and racing; and next thing you know, you've missed 430 weeks.

I was that guy! I was planting a church/building this thing, and I'm missing all of this. I’m like—one day it hit me—I’m like: “I need to be home, putting them to bed. If nothing else, I don't need to be in another meeting,” and “That's a priority.” Now, I can look back at grandkids and go, “I'm glad I made that hard decision.”

I think some parents: “How do they change their schedule to get that priority in their life?”

**Josh:** One of the very first things I tell them is: “Find the one thing—where is your biggest pain point? What is the one area, where you go, 'I'm missing it'?" Usually you can feel it. It's like you're saying you got to this place, where you felt like, “I need to be there at bedtime”; then go do that one thing.
Ann: I talk to so many moms that are frustrated because they feel like they're doing this alone. They can't get their husbands to join in or take part. What's the best way for them to encourage their husbands? Or should they even try to do that?

Josh: One of the ways that we talk about this is getting on the same team. We do a lot of coaching now. We used to be in the counseling field, and now we're doing a lot of coaching with families. The idea is getting them, especially husband and wife, in the same locker room.

It really is important to get down into—for a wife to be able to say to her husband, “I feel alone in this.” And for the husband to be able to be honest with her to say, “I need help.” A lot of times, it's the husband saying, “I don't know how to help.” Sometimes, it's just saying: “Can we meet in our locker room and get a game plan together? Can I ask for help for a minute? Let's get on the same team here.”

Bob: Part of the way you can get on the same team is by getting something like a study like this—like the Homegrown study, and sitting down together and saying, “Could we do this?”—and maybe have the conversation ahead of time: “At what rhythm could we do this?” because there may be one of you, who is wired toward: “We need to accomplish this; tackle this now,”—and the other one is—“No, we just need to go with it, relaxed.”

Meet in the middle and find a way to accomplish this. One of you is going to be frustrated that you're not doing every day; the other one is going to b /kind of, “This is more than I had imagined.” Well, just work on it together, support one another, and get through something like this. Then pullback and say: “Did that have a positive benefit on us?—on our family?” and “What's the next thing we can do?”

Josh: You used the word, “rhythm,” there. I think rhythm is so critically important; because we try to get balance in our lives, and we're never going to attain balance; but we will be able to set healthy rhythms. We want to be families, who dictate the culture around us. We don't want the culture around us to dictate who we're becoming.

When we are intentional and we set these rhythms, we can be families, who—we don't have it all together—but we're doing everything we can to be a blessing and to love other people and to live with healthy rhythms. When you do that, other families start to say: “Tell us how you're doing that. What is your…” “It's Jesus—it starts there, and then here's how we live as a result of that.”

Dave: You know, if you're going to win, you have to have a game plan. A game plan comes from a playbook. Every successful team has a playbook they run off of. Obviously, your playbook is the Word of God; and yet Homegrown and these materials are application of that playbook. Here’s what I thought, “Every couple right now, after listening to this, should set a date night, go out, sit down and say: ‘What are we trying to do with our family?’ and ‘What is the tool to help us get there?’”
They've got to do that. That's that locker-room talk that you do in a sports team—you do it everyday on a football team. You're in the locker room, every day, talking about stuff that matters; and then you go out and do it. We don't do that as families; we have to sit down and talk and say: “Where are we going? How are we going to get there? What's our strategy? Let's go.”

**Christi:** That is; and what we've found is—*that* is how you engage the husbands. Typically, the women are the ones that *feel* it the most; right? They're *feeling* this lack of presence; and the men are out there, with very attainable goals, in their jobs—whatever that looks like/whatever stage they're on. They're chasing something—it's the way they're wired.

At home, it's just this free-for-all/willy-nilly. There's no purpose; we're just kind of existing, getting through the days. No wonder they'd rather be at work, going *after* something. But if you can get on the same team and set—we talk about family values; you're setting goals for the family—it's something where you're aligned in purpose and, then, there's a strategy to get there. It's amazing to see what a family on mission can do when there is a *mission*.

**Ann:** For single parents, can they do this with a group of people? Should they do it alone? What do you suggest?

**Christi:** Absolutely. You can do it, just yourself. But we could also do this with your small group. Maybe there's a group of even just moms around you that can go through this together. I think that's what's really cool—is doing it in community.

**Bob:** I think it's important for all of us to remember, as we talk with our kids about the fruit of the Spirit, that we're talking about something that God does supernaturally in our lives. We're not talking about: “How can you become more patient?” We're talking about: “How can you get closer to Jesus?”—

**Christi:** Right.

**Bob:** —and “How can Jesus make you more patient?”—that shift for kids to understand, “If I want to be more patient, the answer is, ‘Get closer to Jesus.’ If I want to be more self-controlled, the answer is, ‘I've got to get closer to Jesus.’”

For you to guide moms and dads and families in that kind of journey—I'm so grateful for this. Even as we think about the new year, I hope a lot of families will say, “Let's make this the first six weeks,” or “…the first six months,”—whatever your rhythm is—“Let's incorporate that into what we've got going on.”

Guys, thanks again for being here with us.

**Josh:** It's an honor.
Christi: Thank you for having us.

Bob: We've got copies of the Bible study book Josh and Christi have written called *Homegrown: Cultivating Kids in the Fruit of the Spirit*. You can go to our website, FamilyLifeToday.com, to order your copy; or you can order it by calling 1-800-358-6329. Again, find the book online; order it from us, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com; or call to order at 1-800-358-6329—that's 1-800-"F" as in family, “L” as in life, and then the word, “TODAY.”

Now, as we mentioned earlier, we are down to the final days of 2019. We just have a few days left to try to take full advantage of a $3 million matching-gift opportunity that has been presented to us, here at *FamilyLife*. Some friends of the ministry have agreed to match any donation we receive today, up to a total of $3 million; that's good through next Tuesday.

If you have been thinking about a yearend contribution; or if you've just been thinking about organizations, ministries, people God has used in your life over the last 12 months to help you grow closer to Him—if *FamilyLife* is on that list—would you consider a yearend contribution, knowing that your donation here is going to be matched, dollar for dollar? You'll be helping *FamilyLife* head into a new year, ready to take on the challenges that are in front of us. We believe this is a time for moving forward, not a time for retreating, as a ministry. Help make that happen when you donate today. Go to FamilyLifeToday.com to make an online donation; or call to donate: 1-800-358-6329—that's 1-800-"F" as in family, “L” as in life, and then the word, “TODAY.”

If your donation is $50 or more, be sure to request a copy of the couples' devotional, *The Story of Us*, that our team has put together, here at *FamilyLife*. And pray for us; will you?—that we'll take full advantage of this; that we can head into the new year, ready financially, for the challenges that are ahead of us. Thanks.

We hope you have a great weekend this weekend. I hope that you and your family are able to worship together in your local church. And I hope you can join us back on Monday. If you know somebody, who is single, encourage them to tune in as well. Ben Stuart is going to be here to talk about the stages of singleness, dating, getting engaged, and getting married. The whole journey from single to married: “What does that look like today?” and “How do you navigate that well?” I hope you can tune in for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, who got some help from our friend, Mark Ramey. On behalf of our hosts, Dave and Ann Wilson, I’m Bob Lepine. We will see you back Monday for another edition of *FamilyLife Today*.

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