

Parenting with purpose:

Insights and tools from Courtney DeFeo

TRANSCRIPT

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NOTE: This transcript was AI-generated and has not been fully edited.

[00:00:00] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Greetings. Welcome back to the Denison Forum podcast. I'm Mark Turman, executive director of Denison Forum, and we're glad to have you along for another conversation as we seek to equip believers to think biblically, to live beautiful, holy lives, to serve in redemptive ways, to try to help the world flourish more.

Until Jesus comes again, and we want to do that for every person that we possibly can around here at denison forum these days We are celebrating an anniversary We are 15 years old this year Starting in february of 2009 our founders jim denison and jeff bird set out on a vision that god put into their hearts and minds To do what we said to just try to equip believers to walk closely with God and to serve his purposes it wasn't long after denison forum got launched in 2009 trying to discern the news differently and to interpret cultural events through a biblical lens That that conversation led into other areas like how do we help parents do this at home?

How do we help them to equip? Their children and their grandchildren and others that might be under their Testimony and under their witness. How do we do that? So we launched another ministry that was called christian parenting And then following not long after that a devotional resource called first 15 that just helps people to spend time with god through an app and through a website And then also ultimately to a fourth ministry called foundations, which is our Bible study ministry.

You can find all of that through any of those ministries, including denisonforum.org or denisonministries.org. And God has just led us into a path of being what I call a digital church. That comes along the, alongside the local church to reinforce and to assist what the local church is trying to do.

And so that's a broad view of what we are about at Denison Forum and Denison Ministries. And today we're privileged to talk in the area of Christian parenting. One of the beautiful stories that we read about in the Bible is the story of Timothy, which is One of the associates, one of the

colleagues of the Apostle Paul, as he went around the New Testament world, starting churches, sharing the gospel and seeing people come to Christ.

And we find. In his story that one of his teammates was a young man that he recruited by the name of Timothy. We know something about Timothy's journey into faith through his mother and his grandmother's faith, which is a beautiful story in and of itself. Toward the end of his life, the apostle Paul is still engaging with Timothy and, and says to Timothy, and in his last letter, he says, You remember Timothy that you have known the way of salvation through the scripture that from your infancy.

I love this. It says from your infancy. You have known the scriptures and the way of salvation starting with what happened in your family through your mother and your grandmother. We don't know what happened in terms of Timothy's other family, his father or possible siblings. We're not given that information, but we're given enough to see a beautiful, beautiful story that aligns with our mission and desire for Christian parenting and helping us today is one of the members of that team, Courtney DeFeo, and we're going to talk with her today.

Let me tell you a little bit about Courtney, and then we're going to get into a really great conversation. She is the host. Of one of our Christian parenting podcasts called pardon the mess which tells you right off what parenting is about from our perspective. Anybody that has parented more than about 36 hours knows that that's an, an appropriate title.

But Courtney is the author of a book called in this house. We will giggle and a book called treasured. She is also the creator of what is called the ABC scripture cards and the kindness movement that is called light, light them up acts. And she'll tell us a little bit more about that. She loves to encourage parents and women through speaking, writing, as well as podcasting.

She serves on the board of lighthouse family retreat, which is another thing we hopefully get the. Talk to her about her deepest desire is to encourage others and to generously give in a way that draws people to God. She's married to her husband, Ron, and they have two teenage girls now, which means she's really in the thick, thick of it.

Girls, 17 and 15 and is also, I love this. The last line of her bio, Courtney is passionate about Jesus coffee. Auburn football, which we may have to have a little problem with. We'll see Coca Cola, her dog Maisy and spending time with friends and family. And as my wife would say, her, maybe one of her greatest claims to fame is she likes finding a good deal at TJ Maxx.

So Courtney, that you and my wife would have a good time shopping together. So welcome to the Denison forum podcast. We're glad to have you with us today.

[00:05:12] **Courtney DeFeo:** Hey Mark. Thank you so much. My favorite child, Maisie, the dog is already barking. I'm like, you know, it's going to be a good podcast when the warfare comes through the barking dog. But I'm delighted to be here and to be a part of the team. I think Denison is such a trusted source and I'm really thankful that part of the mass and Christian parenting folds under that.

And we're just locking arms and doing this thing together. So I appreciate you having me.

[00:05:35] **Dr. Mark Turman:** We're glad to have you. Maybe we just touch on this Auburn football thing. When I landed at seminary a long, long time ago, my first roommate at seminary was The first war Eagle I ever encountered and, and he was, we were living in Fort Worth in the dorm together and going to seminary together.

And he was really homesick for Auburn. So there's something really special going on

[00:06:01] **Courtney DeFeo:** special breed. We're a special breed. Both of my grandfathers went there. My mom and dad met there. My sister went ahead of me. Then I went and now I'm currently brainwashing my oldest daughter, who it is her number one choice. We'll find out later this fall if she's going there, but it's a special place.

And I think if you, any college that your family is a part of, those traditions just are deep and they're fun. And we've told her she could go to any college except Alabama. That's what my dad told me. And so we're, we're going to We're crazy about being an Auburn Tiger. And then our yell, our war cry is War Eagle.

So it's confusing, but it's special. And, you know, I'm at that age where I'm like, Lord, I really want her to go where you have, where you lead her. And so that's a hard conversation. Cause I sure would like to wear orange and blue and go to a football game, but I really do trust where he leads her.

[00:06:43] **Dr. Mark Turman:** you're not, and now we'll get into this in a moment as well, but born in Atlanta and now living in the Dallas area by way of Orlando, which every young parent should try to figure out how to go on that same itinerary. I would think. But yeah, even, but even the conversation of talking to your teenage child about college is kind of a messy thing, isn't it?

[00:07:04] **Courtney DeFeo:** Yup. I think when mine were little, I really did think I wouldn't have admitted this out loud, but I can now, I really did think there was a recipe. If you put a plus B plus C and it equals a child that loves and knows and follows God. And we know pretty quickly that that doesn't work because we're all human or human parents with different backgrounds.

Kids make their own choices. And so I think today we'll talk about how it's both. I'm noticing a danger in the extreme. So whether we think it's like. Okay. God's in control. We just toss our hands up and throw them to the wind, which is really an unhealthy extreme. And then on the other side, it's about, do we micromanage their lives so much that we don't leave room for God to do that?

And I find myself, if I trend towards one, I am, I trend towards the helicopter, the hovering, the over micromanaging, and I'm realizing. I'm realizing really closely right now how this is still going on with me as their teenagers going I cannot make this choice for her. And what a disservice it would be to her if I did make her college choice for her, because she could end up in a place that was fun, but it wasn't where God intended her to go.

And so, yeah, all the stages are just this constant messy battle of Lord, I trust you. I want you to lead their lives. But I'm this, Harping, loving mom that I've never loved anything more in my entire life. My husband would say, wait, what about me? But I really want to do it so well. So it comes from a pure place.

I think many parents are listening, going yeah, me too. Like I want to do everything in me to make them great, kind adults that follow Jesus, but we're not in control. And that's good and bad news.

[00:08:34] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. And as I, as I tell people, when I get to talk at church or whatever, I tell them, you know, the problem is we're all control freaks and that's, that's our attempt to try to be God instead of letting

[00:08:45] **Courtney DeFeo:** Yep.

[00:08:46] **Dr. Mark Turman:** But I also, you know, I also remember a ministry when I was raising kids in my family, my kids are grown adults now, but I went, took them to a ministry out in Northern California called J H

[00:08:56] **Courtney DeFeo:** Oh yeah.

[00:08:57] **Dr. Mark Turman:** You may be familiar with them, but learn from J H ranch that, you know, you go through these seasons of you're, you're the policeman and then you're the coach and then you're the, Then you're the mentor. And then as they come into their college and adult years, you get to be their partner, if they invite you to be

[00:09:15] **Courtney DeFeo:** Right. Absolutely. I was actually in, my daughter has a new coach. She's not a counselor, but she's more, she just has a passion to serve young girls. And so she's 15 and we were sitting in a session together. The moms come for the first session and then she does a four week study with this girl. That's amazing.

That talks about their identity. And in the first session, You would think 17 years into parenting. I'm like, I got this. In the first session, she's asking my youngest questions about what she wanted from the time. And I kept answering for her. And the lady so graciously said do you always talk for her?

And I, it wasn't mean, but it was so humbling to go we are in a new phase. I don't know. I cannot I can teach and train in their little years, but we are in coaching and guiding where I've got to back up and let her have a voice and an opinion. And so it was super humbling. And I have recognized it over the last two weeks since she said that wow, I do it all the time because I think I know what's best, but it's Lord, you actually know more than me, but I sure do have an opinion and a mouth and books and thoughts on all that.

[00:10:13] **Dr. Mark Turman:** like, Hey, the whole podcast world, the internet world knows I'm an expert. Why doesn't she, right?

[00:10:18] **Courtney DeFeo:** That's right. That's right.

[00:10:19] **Dr. Mark Turman:** So tell us a little bit of the Courtney background story about your family and, and your journey to faith. Tell us a little bit about that background.

[00:10:28] **Courtney DeFeo:** Yeah. As you were talking about Denison and just the power of legacy, I thought, man, I am really grateful. I had a grandmother that loved Jesus more than anything. I think she's watched every Billy Graham show that's ever been. And she just to her deathbed that was her prayer that we would know and follow and love Jesus.

I mean, she prayed for us all the time. And so I'm thankful for that history. And then my parents have been married over 50 years and they also loved the Lord and Significant influence on me. And so, you know, when you're a teenager, you're not in it going, Oh, I'm so thankful my parents are godly influences.

But as you get older, you realize, man, what a steady, humbling, loving presence that they were. They were not perfect, but they definitely kept their eyes focused on Jesus. And I'm only realizing now how hard that must have been and how important it was. And so I grew up in Atlanta, went off to Auburn and I say I was working on my testimony.

So I just took a pause and thought it's. It's more fun to have fun than walk with the Lord. And you know, it wasn't until I got done with college, I came back and Louie Giglio was speaking and I just couldn't quit crying. And it was the Holy Spirit saying come back to me. You thought you could, you know, I'm an Achiever, like I'm like, I'm going to run everything on campus.

I'm going to be the president of everything and it ended up empty. You know, we all try things to fill our heart and it ended up empty. And so once I started partnering that passion and ambition

and Achiever in me with what the Holy Spirit and Jesus wanted to do through my life, it's It's been a lot better show.

Hasn't been perfect, but it's been so purposeful to go I'll go, I'll go in and start a company by Tuesday, but it wasn't, you know, something God nudged me to do, then it falls flat every time. So that's a little bit that catches you up to those early years and we can go wherever you want to go after there, but overachiever that met Jesus.

[00:12:09] **Dr. Mark Turman:** So tell us a little bit about that journey from Atlanta to Orlando to Dallas and how that kind of parallels with your journey into ministry.

[00:12:17] **Courtney DeFeo:** Yeah, for sure. So when, before I was married, I was in marketing at Chick fil A headquarters, loving it, Ron was in marketing at Home Depot and we actually met in our first internship. And so, it wasn't till I got pregnant with my first child, Ella, that I just thought, I'm pretty sure I want to stay home during those years that they are little and Ron and I prayed about it.

It didn't make financial sense, but I was feeling personally pressed. That that was what the decision we were supposed to make. So shortly after we did that, I had a second child and I started, you know, one of my mentors, I, you probably know them, Bobby and Robert Wilgemuth dear friends of mine. But Bobby was a mentor and she said, you have a Cadillac engine under the hood and that is not going to turn off.

So, you know, you may not go back to work full time, you may work part time, but she was right, this kind of rumbling under my soul. And so I started a little blog back in the day when my kids were little and started writing about virtues and values and just how we could be a light with our kids. And so it was taking that Chick fil A marketing energy and turning it to a Monday through Friday.

If we're not at church, how do we raise kids to love Jesus in a way that they're not just, you know. You know, it's not like this cop thing where they're being beat over the head, but could it be fun? Could we say when you're generous, God asks us to, it is fun. You know, when we go out and love others and love our siblings.

So I started writing fast forward, ended up moving to Orlando. It's always Ron's job. He's amazingly talented and gets recruited everywhere. Every two days. I'm like who's called you now? But he got recruited to Orlando. And when they were two and five, I, we moved there for six months. That's about four years.

And in that place is where I wrote my first book and started really moving into ministry for families, which I look back and I'm a little embarrassed. Cause I'm like, what did I think I was

doing? Writing a parenting book with a two and five. But I stand by it. I think. I felt like God was moving in me and showing me a new way to parent.

And I was like, it was like having a great recipe that I'm like, why would I hide that? Why wouldn't I look left and right to my neighbors and say, y'all come with me on this journey. What if it isn't, you know, all boring and all stressful. What if it was fun to follow Jesus and teach our kids about it?

So that's Orlando.

[00:14:22] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah and, and how could you not like Orlando

[00:14:25] **Courtney DeFeo:** Yeah. I

[00:14:26] **Dr. Mark Turman:** young kids,

[00:14:27] **Courtney DeFeo:** look, the annual pass, I look, I did not grow up a Disney person, but my, my husband is a fanatic. So it was like the greatest thing ever. We would get the annual pass and he would just take them on a Saturday. He was like, I'm taking one of them. I'm like, no, thanks. It's hot. And the lines are long and I'll stay here.

But it really looking back was a sweet series of years to have them at that kind of magical age experience that it was fun.

[00:14:48] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah yeah, what a great, unique adventure and and yeah, so I, I, I'm going to ask because I'm sure that there are a lot of people who are going to hear this podcast who are wondering like. If you've ever worked at Chick fil a, do you get like a card going out the door that says, okay, Chick fil a for life.

And you can have all the nuggets, all the nuggets and waffle fries that you would want.

[00:15:08] **Courtney DeFeo:** Yeah, we had those cards when I worked there to be our guest cards that they offer free sandwiches, but no, they don't travel with you. But I'm telling you, I look back and God, and that's one thing I felt like God was pressing on me to say to parents today is he does not waste anything.

Like everything I learned is felt like I got an MBA of life and how to run a business with godly principles. Like I would not take those six years back. And you know, it was just life changing. And so I took a lot of what I learned in marketing and when I started my first business and launch products, I was trying to think about business the way they did.

Forget about all the money in the world. How do we make a positive impact on the the world around us? How can we do things in a creative way, in an unexpected way? And so. God does not while it was hard, you know, it was my favorite job I've ever had. It felt like I was cutting an arm off. Like I just loved marketing.

I love the company, but seeing the way he weaves that through my ministry and all the products to come, I owe a big, just debt of thank you to Chick fil A and what they taught me.

[00:16:06] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Oh yeah, just such a great company to look at, learn from. And, and so many people are inspired by just their consistent testimony and, and how well they just simply do business.

[00:16:16] **Courtney DeFeo:** Yeah. That was great. Great experience.

[00:16:18] **Dr. Mark Turman:** And an illustration of how all truth is God's truth, whether it's in business or medicine or other areas of life, God's truth, it's all God's truth.

[00:16:27] **Courtney DeFeo:** Absolutely. And what, and we're a couple of years, Larson's a sophomore. So we're a couple of years away from being empty nesters. And, you know, I'm teetering on Hey, can I have another job? Like I would go back there in a heartbeat. So I'm still friends with the family. I'm still friends with all my friends there.

And I think I would go back on staff there if I were to go back to a full time job. But currently I'm staying on pardon the mess.

[00:16:47] **Dr. Mark Turman:** yeah. Okay. We're going to talk about that a little bit and I can tell you, I can highly recommend that empty nest season. I've been in that for a while now, and it is a particular pivot that you You know, it takes a little while to work through it. And my wife would tell you it took her maybe a little bit longer to work through it as a mom than for me.

But I can tell you that, you know, the first visit back to their room after they go off to college can be a really, hard

[00:17:13] **Courtney DeFeo:** Thanks Mark.

[00:17:14] **Dr. Mark Turman:** now it is I, I described when I left her in the dorm at A& M, Texas A& M, I I described that to parents about to go through that as the best, worst moment or the worst, best moment, I'm not, I'm not sure which one it was, but I still have a mental image of the door closing,

[00:17:31] **Courtney DeFeo:** Yeah. Oh yeah.

[00:17:33] **Dr. Mark Turman:** away.

But yeah, so tell us a little bit about the history behind the podcast, pardon the mess, and some of the things that you talk about there, and then we're going to move and talk about this new resource that y'all have created, the prayer journal, but let's talk about the podcast first. Tell us about pardon the mess.

[00:17:50] **Courtney DeFeo:** Yeah. So it originated with a friend of mine over at Christian Parenting that started it several years ago, Cynthia Yanov, and she did an amazing job for about three years, I believe. And as she was feeling nudged to move on and do something different. I was feeling a nudge to come off of a three year break.

I took about three years off of ministry and working and you know, I did stuff locally, but I was not really online at all. I wasn't, I took a break from my existing podcast from writing and just, I didn't know if that was forever. I didn't know if God was saying like that was a season and we're pumping the breaks and it was.

And so I did. And then right about the time, cause God just does this stuff. He's nudging Cynthia to transition and they're looking for a host. I'm feeling this nudge to go back into parenting in some level. I didn't know what. And so I get a call from Jill Jefferson over at Christian Parenting, and she said, we want you to interview for part of the mess.

And as soon as I heard mess, I'm like, okay, I can do that because I am not a neat and tidy Christian parent. I am just like other people. And I never wanted to. Appear as though I had it going on. I'm the expert. I want to be in it with you learning. And so it really was appealing to me through the process.

We both kind of fell in love with each other and thought this is probably a match and we feel like it's supposed to happen. And so on Thursdays I get to interview different people that are experts and I get to ask questions about parenting because you're never too old to learn. And I just filtered that with.

Just a guess that's going to come on. That's going to merge those worlds, faith and parenting and what we can learn from each other through our journeys. And then on Mondays during the school year, this was something that I tried to nix out of the contract that they said, no, that's a part of, I'm like, I can't do all this.

They said on Mondays, there's a prayer journal. And then you pray through that prayer journal. And I really was. I didn't want to overcommit, but I will tell you, I'm so glad they made me do it. Cause this last year I prayed every Monday on the podcast with a group of parents through a parenting journal.

And it's one of the best things I've ever done. And this ADHD girl over here, I needed the accountability to be the host, to show up and pray. But I can tell you the last time I've prayed specifically. For my kids, like I've prayed, don't let them get hurt. Lord God protect them. Lord bring a great husband, but not specifically as we did every Monday.

And so I'm fired up to do it again. When the school year starts back, we'll have a new journal called a life of faith and we will pray together again. And so I'm thrilled about it.

[00:20:02] **Dr. Mark Turman:** So tell us a little bit about how the prayer journal works. The, the prayer journal becomes available on or about July the 8th, maybe a little bit earlier. And you'll be able to find it at christianparenting.org, but just tell us how that works. How does this prayer journal experience actually work?

Especially for those that haven't been through it already,

[00:20:22] **Courtney DeFeo:** Yeah. So in true confession, Stephanie over, she's our executive director. Steph is over at Christian parenting, asked me to write it and I just felt I don't know. I just thought I can contribute, but I want it to be a team effort. And so she did a lot of the heavy lifting the team at Christian parenting.

We kind of brainstormed the theme and felt like this year, we really wanted to talk about the journey that is faith. So it's not just a one time decision. It is sometimes a 20 year journey, a 40 year journey. And sometimes I think Christian parents, we get caught up in that. It's a moment decision and then check our kids are baptized and we can move on.

But it is a journey as we all know at 47 years old, I'm still on a journey. So we wanted to specifically pray for. through knowing, loving, following, and sharing Jesus. And so there are 37 weeks in there, which covers the school year. And we will start, you know, week one is about God, the father, week two, Jesus, our savior.

And we go very specifically, and it's just a one and a half page devotional. If you order the journal, you can read through that. And then it gives you some. Places to take notes of what God's pressing on your heart, God's scripture in it. And then on the podcast, what we do is I come on for five or 10 minutes and just talk about the topic.

And then I lead everybody in a prayer. And a lot of moms have told me they do it on the way after they dropped their kids off from school. It's their ritual. They, cause I think the angst and the worry of the week bubbles up so fast and that control comes washing in. And we just have this heavy burden on our shoulders.

And for me, it felt like a weekly deep breath, a weekly, just Lord, they're yours. Show me where I need to step in. Show me where you have this and I need to let it go. And so it's a weekly

prayer together, but I do recommend the journal, especially if you have multiple kids, because as you're praying, something different may come up for Ella than it would be for Larson.

And also I was going to confess to you. I'm scared today. I was like, I'm scared to look back because we should, but I could look back last year and see all the ways that we prayer and actually see where God showed up and answer those prayers. But if we're truthful, there's things we're still praying for that he didn't answer.

And that can be, I think that's a hard thing. This morning I was wrestling and what is that for me? Am I scared? It's a no that I prayed for this and it didn't happen. Did I pray for this? And it's a no, not yet. But do I still pray? So I think that was an interesting tension that just came off my heart this morning to go do I have the courage to look back and say, of course it was worth it.

Of course it was worth it to pray. But did he answer some of the prayers and the way I wanted? Probably not. He probably answered them and the way he wanted for each of our kids.

[00:22:48] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. That, that, that whole retrospect thing of thank God for answered for non answered prayers. Right.

[00:22:54] **Courtney DeFeo:** yes,

[00:22:55] **Dr. Mark Turman:** and, and I can't remember who it was. One of the theologians in history said, God, you know, if you, if you ever need to cancel my prayer and substitute something else, please do

[00:23:04] **Courtney DeFeo:** That's right. That's exactly

[00:23:05] **Dr. Mark Turman:** probably I probably don't have the insight that you do.

So, you know, just always his will being the highest and best thing that we could ever want for them. Even if it doesn't align with our dreams.

[00:23:17] **Courtney DeFeo:** And you can tell us you're ahead of us. Like you have grandchildren. I think when you get down to the fact that you cannot make them believe a certain thing, you cannot manufacture their friends. You can try, you know, they're little, we have time and money. So it's like, where are we putting them at places like Jay's ranch?

Are we having them go to church? Like we have an influence. We can't make them do anything. So as a grandfather, would you look back and say that prayer was one of those top things that you're like, if you just throw away everything that you've heard, cause there's a lot of noise out there. Would prayer be one of those top things for you that you know, you would do all over again?

[00:23:49] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Oh, I think it becomes it really becomes kind of the passionate air that you breathe because it doesn't take very long, right, before we realize. Especially when you get into some of these life relationships of marriage, marriage will bring you to your knees pretty fast. Most people that have been married for about 36 hours can testify to that.

But then also parenting seems to accelerate that even putting it on steroids because you realize that as much as you think you might be in control, even of a three or a five year old, you find out. You're not nearly as in control as you might want to be. And you, you can feel very quickly some of your unvirtuous side coming out in your, in your lack of patience, your, your anger starts to roll.

We learned through a lot of struggles as parents raising our kids that anger was really a mask for fear. And that could be either our anger, or it could be our child's anger. And that, that anger was always a symptom of something else. And most often, it was a symptom of fear. And if we could try to take a deep breath and calm that down and say, Okay, let's, let's see if we can talk about and surface out.

What is it that's driving the anger? And, and could we get to that fear and somehow deal with it in a more effective way rather than just yelling at each other about it or start storming off that, but all of that grew out of a really desperate pursuit of God's will for their life as well as for our lives.

Because nobody likes and no family likes living in perpetual tension. With each other. And so, you know, you pray and yeah, there are some big themes that we take from scripture. We, of course we want to pray for their salvation, but we also want to pray that they would become sanctified, that they would continue that relationship that you're talking about in the prayer journal and that yes, there are some things they need to know fundamentally about what the Bible tells us about God and about the nature of God and about how to learn to trust him, but then.

But then what does it mean to actually love him and to trust him on a faith level? So we want to pray through that and it's yes great celebration When your child comes to faith, I mean that is a moment that ought to be a big deal It ought to be a big

[00:26:18] **Courtney DeFeo:** Yeah, that's right. Yeah,

[00:26:20] **Dr. Mark Turman:** And, and we tried, you know, we tried to make those appropriate.

And especially when we came to family celebrations of baptism make it a big deal, it ought to be a big moment. But it is only, as we often say, the start of an adventure is not the end or the sum total. And then how do you pray consistently for their sanctification and growth? And in, you

know, I've, I've always Courtney struggled with the word holiness, it just seems too far out of reach.

And in recent years, I've kind of substituted the word beauty that God, they would just live a, they'd live a beautiful life with you and for you.

[00:26:57] **Courtney DeFeo:** As you're mentioning that, I think about my mom and she's just kind of on this pedestal for me. She's lived a great life. And again, she wouldn't want me to say I am not perfect, but she really didn't have all these things like resources and books and all that. She would follow God's word. And what she was really good at was apologizing.

And I think one of those things that you notice is that your parents have their own faith in You have your own faith. Your kids have their own faith and kind of what, how those things intermingle. And so for example, with anger, I remember struggling in with that when my kids were little, I would just get exasperated.

And then there was a lot of reasons for that. I was trying to do too much. I didn't sleep well. There's a lot of things, but it can be exasperating. I mean, they're loud, they can be annoying, all that stuff. But I just remember thinking my mom would just not even be angry. And God showed me that that's not true.

But I thought, could I grow over time? Could I hold back and it takes me longer to get angry. Could I be quick to apologize? And eventually. I don't have as much anger, but it's a puzzle piece. And I think sometimes I don't want anyone to get on part of the mass or Christian parenting and think we're going to give you the answer.

Like you pray this way and you read this first and poof, you're not an angry parent anymore. And I don't think that's what God intends for us. We bring that to him and say this is an issue. It goes against what you've called us to do. It's not once the, one of the fruits of the spirit. So, and that's just one example of hundreds as a parent that you go.

This anger is not good for me. It's not good for our family environment and it's not good for my kids. How can I make progress and learn from others? But ultimately Lord say, just prick me in that. Like I want to go to bed with that conscious and recognize that it's God not condemning me. It's not Satan saying you're a horrible parent, but it's God going I have more for you in this.

And when you can recognize that gentle voice going, I have more, like it, it does not have to be this way. It's almost like we get to pray. We get to walk with Jesus, not we have to. And that's a big switch in Christian parenting. Not versus have to check the list. I'm a loser versus like I get to partner with someone that can be more powerful than me ever trying to do this alone.

And so for me, I'm grateful for Jesus.

[00:28:59] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, and absolutely. And just like I said, in making this just the rhythm of your life and the, and the routine, the rhythm and the routine of your life, and I think that's where the journal, something like this and supported by the podcast can be really helpful. It's kind of to say, Hey, I'm going to create a discipline and a rhythm of trying to do this.

Intentionally and following out the, the instructions of scripture. You know, Jesus is in some ways doing that when he gives us the model prayer. But you know, I grew up in a big family. I'm the seventh of eight kids. There were always siblings around and, you know, we, we stuffed a station wagon year over year just getting to school and I can remember, I have a very vivid memory of my mom.

You would often look at her driving the station wagon and you could see her lips moving, but no words coming out. And I have, the more I've thought about over the years, I thought she's praying,

[00:29:54] **Courtney DeFeo:** Yeah. Yeah.

[00:29:55] **Dr. Mark Turman:** she's praying God, get me to where I need to go so I can get these kids out of this car. But she, she's praying that, you know, she, she doesn't have to, you know, Meet out discipline while she's trying to drive to the grocery store or cross town.

But I'm convinced now that as a mother of eight children she just was constantly in this mindset of, Lord, I can't do this on my own. How could anybody raise, you know, even one child, much less eight on, you know, without God's help. And I'm, I'm constantly reminded of that. And I'm reminded, inspired at times by the example of Daniel.

Where it says that Daniel three times a day, very intentionally went home, got down on his knees, looked out a window that looked toward Jerusalem and, and, you know, he's the, he's the second most important, powerful person in the world at that point. And he's creating this routine in his life. I have to have God's help to figure this out because I, I don't know how to do this.

[00:30:53] **Courtney DeFeo:** Guess what I did the other day. So I was on the podcast talking about a regret. It was me and Carrie Campakus saying, these are three regrets I have. And one of those was, and you would think I'm old enough, I was like, I fire off emails when I'm mad. Like a mama bear. I'm so protective.

And I'm so quick to use the words. God gave me a voice and I'm quick. And so I said, if I'll just remember to wait 24 hours, I will not be mean to the teacher. I will not be mean to the other mom. I will have more of Jesus come out of me if I'll just wait a second and pray. And wouldn't you know, after that podcast aired, I did it like the next Tuesday.

I'm like, we just talked about this. And I got in the heat of a moment with some other kids and I just fire it off too quickly. And I think it's important for us to go to our kids and say I'm really sorry. And I didn't handle that well. And, and just pray. I'm like that. If I could just do that as I don't know if y'all are more patient than me, but if I could just pause and wait, and sometimes with our kids, you have to correct and just one in the moment.

But sometimes you feel just wait a day and circle back to them. God will give you a different word of discipline or encouragement or really show you what's going on underneath the thing with our kids. Because I think we so often look at their behavior and that becomes the lens of if we've got good Christian kids, are they behaving towards our exact rules?

And so it's a complicated web, but like you said, I really do believe prayer is one of those top tools that I can't survive without it. And I'm grateful every time I do it, I can't think of a time I prayed and I regretted it. And then one other thing I wanted to tell you is there's two different mops groups here in the Dallas area.

They meet as moms of preschoolers and they do the journal together on top of their mops meetings. And I love that because when I went to speak with them, they were like, we just love the conversation. It's so much fun. It starts because it's not just pray that they will know God. We go very specifically into just the friends that they have or the confidence they will have in truth.

And it starts some conversations that are really healthy around their group. And so I say, grab some friends, buy some journals and let's do it together this year.

[00:32:46] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. And that, I think that's a great idea because that creates, you know, some gentle sometimes not so gentle, but usually gentle accountability with each other. Right. They can help you go. It's kind of like so many other things, whether you're trying to start an exercise routine or something like that.

Doing it with somebody else, even one person or two or three can create that extra level of motivation to try to ingrain that as a habit. Courtney, talk about the journal side of it and why you know, many people like, okay, give me something, you know, reasonable link to, to read great that there's a podcast that can give me, you know, five, six minutes of, of encouragement and reinforcement.

I can do that in the car or while I'm, you know, on the treadmill trying to get a few miles in or something like that. But talk about that piece of actually writing some of your thoughts down. And as one of my pastor friends says, putting it in your own

[00:33:39] **Courtney DeFeo:** That's right.

[00:33:40] **Dr. Mark Turman:** What is, why is that valuable? What is the power in that?

[00:33:44] **Courtney DeFeo:** I think for me, I will go on the podcast and talk about, as I see, let's like just pick a topic. So the table of contents, you can go through and see that we have a section for no love, follow and share. So say for example, week 15 is about love their enemies. I know where God's pressing on my heart, specifically in our family to love their enemies.

I don't know if that looks like a certain friend to one of my lives. I don't know if that looks like another mom. And so I can kind of write down, okay. He just brought this person to mind, Lord, I don't pray specifically over this. And so I think it's that reflection time to go, Lord, what do you want to say to me about the scripture?

And then there's other scriptures that relate to that topic. So under love their enemies, you can go into, we put one, two, three, four, six different verses that have to do with that, that then you can lift, look up and prayer process further. And I do think we don't all go week by week. What I love for you to do every week and do this note, but we sometimes get a month behind and then you can go back and say, Whoa, I'm really struggling with this.

What would God have to say about this and are my kids faith? And then you've got somewhere to look back if you can't find the podcast. So I do think you're right. I think writing it down does something that we take from our, our heart down to our, you know, paper that goes like, Oh, I really did hold on to that.

Or I really am worried about that. And I haven't said that out loud. And you'll be surprised what hits the pen to the paper when you start praying for God to reveal things in your own heart, in your own lives. So I'm a big fan. I think it's something you can keep too. Like I said, here's last year's. I could go back right now and look through the things I prayed for my kids and see where he answered them and where he didn't answer them and be brave enough to do that.

Right.

[00:35:15] **Dr. Mark Turman:** and yeah, I think it's a great, great, you know, I've journaled off and on. I've I've learned not to be legalistic with the journaling that you know, I have to fill a page every day. It's fine if you do, but you don't, it doesn't have to be that way. And sometimes it can be as simple as a word or a phrase.

I've encouraged, I've been encouraged the last couple of years, but Hey, You don't have to have perfect handwriting and you don't have to worry about spelling. You're just, you're just trying to get some of your thoughts in conversation with God down on a piece of paper that will help you think through it, process it more.

And it does become a testimony that your kids and grandkids can go back to later. You know, my family knows. I've got a stack of journal in the closet and if the house catches on fire grab that

because that'll be the story of our lives played out in prayer. And so my, my wife and my kids, they kind of know that to be the case.

Tell us a little bit more you will just about some of the other resources that parents can find through Christian parenting and through pardon the mess. The journal will come out, like I said, early July and people can order it through christianparenting.org. You can also get there through denisonforum.

org. But what are some of the other tools that y'all offer that parents can access to be helping them along the way?

[00:36:31] **Courtney DeFeo:** Yeah. One of the things that we came up with last year was we called them guides. So right now we were looking at technology going, this is a beast of a topic. Like it is so hard to get your hands around. What do you do with technology as a believer and a Christian parent? What do you, what age appropriate things?

And, and so we put together all these things. We pull blog posts, we pull videos, we pulled podcasts and we put them into one guide. And so that did so well that we thought, what are other topics? You know, cause sometimes, you know, it's important, but you get frozen. You're like, I don't even know what to say.

If somebody will give me a script or give me some guidelines. lines. And so they did one on politics. They've done one on discipleship. How do you disciple your kids? And so they're almost like many digital guides and books where you can kind of pull through and say Oh, I have a 14 year old. That's the thing I want to look at.

I'm going to look at how the social media impact my teenager. And so I'm thrilled that we're doing that because I'm not the only podcast. There is a network of podcasts with so many great people under Christian parenting and the team at Christian parenting is pulling all of those together into one resource.

So keep a lookout whenever you see the word guide, bye. That is something that you want to pay attention to because we've done the hard work to say, here's everything we filtered through. We trust in it. We believe the voices that are pouring into this. And it's just things to think about with whatever struggle that you're going through.

And we want your ideas. There's a particular area message us or Christian parenting and say, I wish you had a guide on friendship or whatever. And we'll just do our best to get that to you. Yup.

[00:37:49] **Dr. Mark Turman:** hope that it's helpful to you. As you, you engage as both a parent and as a grandparent. And if you find that you're neither of those things, that doesn't mean that

you don't have the opportunity to be influential to the next generation, the next couple of generations that are coming along.

And so you can do that in the context of your local church and in your neighborhood. All of us are around children, even if they're not our own children. And so how can we be that kind of encouraging testimony and witness to them in every way, Courtney, before we go, I wanted to get your thoughts on just one of these issues.

Right now just in the last day or two, the surgeon general has come out with a statement about the dangers of technology and particularly social media. To teenagers, you're raising two girls and, and many people have commented even in some of the resources on Christian parenting that we've used, that social media is really hard on children and on teenagers, particularly on girls very, very powerful book that's been released in the last month or so, six weeks by Jonathan Haidt. the Anxious Generation Disney movie out. There's not a plug for a movie, but the second installment on the inside out series my wife and I went to see that a few days ago and there were two 20 year olds sitting next to her who were in tears by the time the movie was over because the movie was a reflection of their lived experience.

What are, what are a few insights that you might share with us about how parents can be wise in terms of technology and social media? As it pertains to their children, what would, what would you first recommend?

[00:39:28] **Courtney DeFeo:** Mark, I would say, please don't ask me that question.

[00:39:33] **Dr. Mark Turman:** you're supposed to have this figured out, Courtney.

[00:39:35] **Courtney DeFeo:** I just think if, you know, I hold myself to a certain standard and go, if people knew what social media, my daughters have, they would discount me as a, a leader in Christian. And I just think it's hard. It's just super hard. And. And to know, like my girls, one of them is about to go to college in a year.

So, could I have withheld everything from her? Sure. Does she have a lot of social media? Yes. Have we had conversations to go? What does that make you feel? When she's anxious for do you need some downtime? We've had boundaries and screen times in place to help them. Cause I'm like, if I can't like.

Handle my own screen time and I'm not putting boundaries in to help me. How could a 17 and 15 year old do that when it's literally sucking them in with this content? And so I would say I haven't done it at amazing. We've had a lot of good conversations about it. We also, in the beginning, when they first got a phone, we had conversation that what is the purpose of this device?

So we laugh at those contracts, but I think they're super important to say, like we use this device to communicate with mom and dad. If you don't answer it, that's an issue. We use this device to encourage people, not discourage people like we do not bully. And so I think you can set up some guidelines that say this is what it's for.

This was what we want to see. And of course there's grace for mistakes, but if there is a theme like bullying people. If there's a theme of looking at content that's unwell for your mind and your heart, we have a conversation about that. And technology has come so far. I mean, there's bark, there's covenant eyes.

There's so many places that can help you filter because you cannot look at everything all the time. So I think that's the decision as a parent to go, what age is appropriate. But I completely agree that we're going to have a generation of very, very anxious and we already do anxious teens that we can now see before.

It's we don't know the data. It's we have the data. Like we have the data. Like now we're like, we know that cigarette smoking kills. We have the data. And so are we, have the courage enough, which I didn't always do to lock arms with some other Christian believers and say, we're not doing that fun.

We're doing a flip phone or we're not doing the social media till 16 they will survive. We've seen other people do it, but I just want to echo to the other Christian parent that's I want to do that, but it's challenging. It is super challenging. And I don't know if that's the best answer, but just to say.

Hang in there and reuse these resources that are coming out. Look, put your blinders off and look at the data enough to not shame yourself, but to say what kind of switch should we make and, and put your spouse or your best friend on that accountability to say, we are going to do this. We're the adults, even though they're very convincing and they can talk you into anything, we're going to set some boundaries as a family.

[00:42:02] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. And that's something else to pray about, you know, is, is just, that's a very big, very powerful thing. And, you know, yeah, we've conducted and continue to conduct in some ways, a really big social experiment relative to technology and things like social media. And we didn't have them before. How could we know what they would or wouldn't do?

And you know, there's certainly a lot of, of confessing and repenting that my wife and I have done around this. We would have, if we knew what we know now, we would certainly have handled technology and social media in different ways, which means we can all learn and we can all get better. And, and the the other thing I love that you called out Courtney was just how important it is in your own faith journey and in your parenting to apologize.

is to go back to your child and say, Hey, you know what, I was off the mark there. I overreacted or I underreacted or and, and that doesn't mean you're getting it all wrong, but you know, forgiveness and grace is at the very heart of what the Christian message is all about. And, and, you know, I did grow up in a generation with parents who thought, you know what, I don't have to apologize for much of anything that I do as a parent.

But I do remember a couple of very powerful times, especially when I got into my later 10 teen years of my dad coming and saying, Hey, I blew it

[00:43:19] **Courtney DeFeo:** That's a big deal. Can I tell you, I know we're so late and you can cut this later, but I have a super fast story to tell you. One time I woke up at 3am, maybe two, and it literally was not audible. And I was like, get this child's phone, get her phone. And I went and looked and because, you know, your first kid, you're all over it, you know, and then you kind of just forget.

And so I looked at this phone and there was some things going on in text that I needed to see. And. I was so thankful for the Lord to press on me and I did apologize and said, Hey, I didn't really set up some boundaries in this particular area or this app or this situation and this relationship, and we're going to go back.

And so I want people to know that you can go back and just say, and even take it on to say, Hey, we didn't have this conversation about this particular area and you reserve the right to change your mind. As a parent and say, we're actually going to take that away for a season, or I'm going to just remind you of the way that messaging goes or whatever.

And so that really sticks out to me. Cause I thought, Lord, thank you. Thank you. It's almost I remember Beth Moore one time said, I pray for them to get caught. It's Lord, help me get caught. So I know which thing to address, but thank you for asking the tough questions.

[00:44:23] **Dr. Mark Turman:** yeah. And, and pray that for ourselves, Lord, help us to get caught when we need to get caught as well. Yes. Courtney, thank you for the conversation. And just want to remind everybody, you can get the prayer journal, christian parenting. org. You will find it. It is called a life of faith. The prayer journal for this next season, as we start into the school year, 37 weeks of guided prayer and really, really helpful.

Highly recommend that you get that. And it'll be reinforced by a weekly podcast from Courtney as well, that will help you have even more clarity and more consistency in praying for your kids and praying for them in very intentional ways. Jesus taught us to pray by asking. That means we have to be humble.

He told us to seek, which means we need to be intentional, which is what this prayer journal can help you to do. And we need to be knocking, which means we pray with confidence that he's on the other side of the door, eager to answer and guide and help. Maybe not answering exactly the way we would want, but he will always give us the best answer.

If we come to him with that kind of humility and intentionality, he's there ready to answer. Courtney, thank you for all you're doing in Christian parenting and in pardon, pardon the mess. Thank you to our audience for listening to us today. And we hope that you'll rate, review us and share this with your family and friends and point them not only to denisonforum.org but to christianparenting.org, thank you for following our ministry. And we hope that we're helping you as you walk with Christ and share with your family. Talk to you next time on the Denison forum podcast. God bless you.

[00:46:01] **Courtney DeFeo:** Thank you.