

CA 33 TFP3 THE PARENTING GIFT OF IDENTITY (FORMERLY CA 34 TFP3 PARENTING)**Theme music**

FOSTER: John held his newborn son for the first time. “What a miracle” he said softly to his wife. But as he looked down into his son’s face, he thought, “What do I know about being a dad?” “What if I do the wrong thing?” “What if I’m not smart enough?” A twitch from John’s new son brought him back to this special moment, but the questions remained in his mind.

Welcome to Champions Arise. I’m Foster Braun and I’m with Kent Darcie. John’s thoughts probably mirror many of the questions we had when our first child was born. However, regardless of how long we’ve been a father, we can always learn new ways to be better. In the book “The Four Priorities” by Dr. John Tolson and Larry Krieder, they list three *gifts* fathers can give their children that can help them thrive in childhood and later as adults. These gifts are protection, identity, and confidence. We’ll look at the gift of confidence on our next program. Today we’ll discuss how fathers can help children feel protected and develop a healthy identity. Stay with us. We’ll be right back with Champions Arise.

Music Theme in

FOSTER: Kent, when I think about my precious baby girl, I would have done anything to protect her. But protection is more than just physical right?

KENT: Yes. We have to be careful not limit the meaning of the word. We tend to think of protection as guarding from a physical threat, and that’s important, but there are a lot of ways to protect your family.

I’ve heard it said that the best thing a father can do for his kids is love their mother. A home where this love exists provides important ingredients for healthy kids. These include, steady routines, boundaries, discipline, fun, a sense of belonging, security, a moral framework, freedom to make mistakes and lots more. These tend to serve as protection from children choosing a bad life path.

FOSTER: But this does not guarantee perfect kids.

KENT: No. Having these protections doesn’t guarantee the children will not choose a destructive or unspiritual path in life. But NOT having this protection, greatly increases the chances that they will choose a destructive or unspiritual path. So this protection is very important.

FOSTER: That makes sense and I think we can understand how protection touches the emotional, spiritual, and physical areas of our kids. So what is the gift of identity?

KENT: Identity is who we think we are. Do we have value? Do we have worth? Are we important to anyone? The answers to these questions were formed in our childhoods—mostly by our parents. And our kids will develop their identities, in part, by how they see themselves through our eyes.

FOSTER: I think I'm following you, but can you give me an example of what you mean?

KENT: Imagine you are a singer who is on stage and singing to an audience. As you're singing you notice that some of the people in the audience look bored. Others look like they just bit into a sour lemon. Still others appear to be in pain. When you're done, you notice the look of relief in their faces and then you receive some polite applause. By their actions you'd believe that they didn't like your singing. As a result, your response might be to quit, work harder, or ignore them. But you will respond... just like our kids will respond to our words, actions, or inactions as fathers.

Our children depend almost completely on the responses of others to learn and mold their identity. And since, particularly in the early years, parents are the primary people the children are responding to, it's very important that we respond in a healthy and biblical way.

FOSTER: Would you say the Christian home is the most important place for children to learn and mold their identity?

KENT: Absolutely, because if **we** don't mold our children's identity, movies, TV, radio, and the internet will do it.

FOSTER: And we certainly don't want that!

KENT: No. We want them to learn that their true identity is in Jesus Christ. Over time, as fathers, we need to help our children learn the four parts that combine for being In Christ:

First, that they need to know that they're the high point of God's Creation. Psalm 139 verses 13-18 say:

"You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb.

Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it.

You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb.

You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book.

Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered!

I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand!

And when I wake up, you are still with me!"

First our children need to understand that they're God's handiwork.

FOSTER: And the second thing?

KENT: Second, our kids need to learn that they're born as sinful people in a sin-filled world. Romans chapter 3 verse 23 says: "*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*"

The third thing our children need to know is God affirmed their value despite their sin by sending Jesus Christ to save them. John 3 verse 16 says, "*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*"

And the fourth thing they need to know, is to be in Christ, they must confess their belief in Him. The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 10 verses 9-11, "*If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.*"

FOSTER: Kent it should be the desire of every Christian parent for their children to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord, but you said something that I don't want to miss. You just outlined four key steps for our children to be in Christ, but just before you read those verses you said, that "over time, as fathers, we need to help our children learn these four things. The point here is God expects the father to take the lead in guiding his children to Jesus Christ.

KENT: Yes, in Ephesians 6 verse 4 Paul writes, "*Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*"

FOSTER: Mothers and fathers need to be part of the process, but dads are especially important.

KENT: Not just for the spiritual guidance either. In the United States, eighty five percent of men who are in prison, grew up in fatherless homes. The impact of a father is very significant and the impact of a godly father can affect generations to come.

FOSTER: That's one reason Champions Arise is here—to help men be all that God knows they can be.

KENT: And that's in spite of whether we had a good role model as a father or not. It doesn't matter that our father was a Christian or if he was there at all. Through Jesus Christ, **God** becomes our heavenly Father. And all things are possible with God—our heavenly Father

FOSTER: Including being equipped to be a good father.

KENT: That's right.

FOSTER: So as fathers, while exposing them to Jesus Christ in our lives, what else can we do to help our kids develop a healthy identity?

KENT: We need to have a home environment where “**unconditional love**” is evident. And both these words are important. “Unconditional” is not based on performance.

FOSTER: Meaning, when the kids are good we love them, but when they don’t do well in school, or misbehave, we don’t love them as much.

KENT: Right. That love is conditional, not unconditional. But “love” is the other word I want to look at. What actions help our children feel loved?

Dr. Gary Chapman discovered that our kids usually have one of five possible “love languages.” Our love language is the primary way we feel loved. The five love languages are:

Words of affirmation, Quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch.

FOSTER: Words of affirmation, Quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, and physical touch.

KENT: Yes, but here’s the problem. We love others in our own love language. So if our love language is words of affirmation—if that is how we feel loved, that is how we’ll love our kids (and our wives)—with words of affirmation.

FOSTER: But what if your child’s love language is physical touch?

KENT: We’ll miss their primary way of receiving love. And I’m glad you mentioned physical touch, because this is a good example of supplying love in a way that may not be our own love language—particularly if touch wasn’t common in your childhood.

So what if your love language is words of affirmation and your daughter’s love language is physical touch? If you aren’t hugging and putting your arm around her and touching her in appropriate ways, she is going to seek that physical touch somewhere else—usually with some boy.

FOSTER: So being identified with Christ and seeing and experiencing unconditional love are two necessary parts for a child to develop a healthy identity.

KENT: Yes. Having their worth affirmed is next. Every child needs to know that he or she is special to us—their dads. We show that they are special to us by giving them affection, hugging them, and letting them know they are wanted and appreciated.

FOSTER: That sounds like what adults want too.

KENT: Well, children become adults and the needs don’t change. The only difference is their identity forms in childhood. It’s set by adulthood.

FOSTER: What is the next way we can help our children develop a healthy identity?

KENT: By acknowledging their uniqueness. Every child is created by God with unique qualities and strengths that should be encouraged and supported by their parents. This

takes effort and time. Even though as fathers, we're busy, this time investment will confirm your children's specialness to you. And to their Heavenly Father as well.

FOSTER: I think this can be a bigger challenge when you have more than one child.

KENT: Yes because we have to take the time to learn the specialness of each one. Some are peacemakers, some are bold. I have three kids and I was surprised how different they are. And it's also really important to acknowledge and support the different ways God created them.

FOSTER: We have time for one more way to help children with their identity.

KENT: The fourth way to help our children is by appreciating their presence. Matthew 6:21 says, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." In this scripture, Jesus is referring to money, but the principle is the same to our kids. Do your kids believe that you treasure time with them? One survey taken in the United States showed that parents spent an average of just 15 minutes a week in meaningful conversation with their kids.

When children believe they're an important part of the family structure, they are more secure in who they are. Ideally, that family structure is going to be centered on Christ which will also reinforce their true identity which is as a son or daughter of God.

FOSTER: Kent, parenting can be difficult at times, but I believe we've received very helpful information. Can you please do a brief review of what we covered today?

KENT: Sure. We discussed how protection and identity are gifts parents give to their children. We saw how their identity is first in Christ and then, ideally, a reflection of their Godly parents. However, we stressed that the father is the lead in setting the spiritual tone in the home. Fathers can have a positive or negative impact on the development of the children's identity.

Also, when it comes to parenting, fathers need to remember Jesus' words to the disciples in Mark 10:45. "*For even the Son or Man (Jesus) did not come to be served, but to serve.*"

FOSTER: Thanks Kent. We'll be right back.

Program Close

FOSTER: Thank you for listening to Champions Arise where men are equipped and strengthened to meet their God-given potential. Today we discussed the gift of identity that parents need to give their children. This material was based on chapters 17 and 18 in the book "The Four Priorities," by Dr. John Tolson and Larry Kreider which is published by "The Gathering USA" in 2007 and used with permission. You can learn more about this book and listen to any of these programs at our website championsarise.org. I'm Foster Braun with Kent Darcie. Thank you for listening to Champions Arise. May God mold you into the man He knows you can be.

Closing ID

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