**Episode 24: *Grace Based Discipline, Part 1***

**with Guest Karis Kimmel**

Audra Haney: Thanks for tuning in to the Newborn Promise Podcast, a production of Graham Blanchard Incorporated. You are listening to an interview with Karis Kimmel Murray, called grace based discipline part one. For today's show notes, transcript, and more information about your Newborn Promise Project, please visit grahamblanchard.com.

Thank you again for returning to the Newborn Promise Podcast. I am Audra Haney, and we are so honored to have you here with us. For many, the words discipline and grace seem to be opposites, but our guest today, Karis Kimmel Murray, is passionate about the message that grace and discipline are actually inseparable in giving children a healthy picture of God from their earliest days.

For Karis, she knows this first-hand. As the daughter of Dr. Tim Kimmel, the author of Grace Based Parenting, who was also featured on one of our recent podcast episodes, Karis says she was the test flight for grace based parenting, and the results are something she's happy to spend her life sharing. Today, Karis is the author of her own book, Grace Based Discipline. This is part one of a two part interview. This week, we ask Karis to give us a bird's eye view of what grace based discipline is all about. Next week, we'll dive into some exercises and ideas for understanding our children, ourselves, and grace based discipline a little better.

Karis, thank you so much for being with us today. Grace based parenting and discipline is nothing new to you. If you don't mind, tell me a little bit about your family and what was it like to grow up in your home? You describe yourself as a wind dummy.

Karis Kimmel: Yes, I describe myself as the wind dummy. I'm the oldest of four children, so if I've got any oldest children out there listening, you probably know what I mean by wind dummy. Guinea pig is another way to say it, but I like to describe it that way because our family was sort of the test flight for this thing called grace based parenting.

My mom and dad, Dr. Tim Kimmel is my dad, and Darcy is my mom. They were in youth ministry for years before they had children of their own, and when they found out they were expecting, they ... You know, like so many of your listeners do, they sought out good biblical parenting information. And this was 35 plus ... I'm giving my age away. Years ago, and at the time, this was early '80s. There just wasn't a lot of what they felt was biblical parenting advice that really reflected the heart of God. There was some books written. There was kind of a smattering of advice, and some of it was helpful advice. But they noticed a pattern, and that pattern was that a lot of this advice was sort of evangelical behavior modification, or image control, or fear-based. And they just ... When they looked at it as a whole, they thought, this can't possibly be God's heart. There's no way he would give us one of the most important jobs we'll ever do, and that is parenting and raising our kids, and in his work, not give us clear guidance and help in this.

Audra Haney: And Karis, it really was your parents' study of their own bible when they were expecting you that really led them to the epiphany of grace based parenting, right?

Karis Kimmel: It was actually my mom that was reading, and she kept seeing this pattern of God being called the father, and she went, "Well, he is our father, and we're his children, and so of course the bible is a parenting book. Just look at how God treats his kids." So that's kind of when they got this concept of grace, because that's how God deals with us, is in grace.

So, they began their ministry. They started speaking and writing about it. My dad wrote a book called Grace Based Parenting, and believe it or not, grace gets a lot of pushback, because people don't understand it and because it feels scary. Because you're releasing a lot of control. Toxic control, and you have to be brave. You have to put your fears aside, and trust God with your kids. So the analogy of the wind dummy is that this grace based parenting thing was a test flight, and I was the oldest of four kids. What a wind dummy is, when people are jumping out of airplanes, which I don't understand why people actually do, but they throw a wind dummy out to see, is the jump safe? What's going to happen to the wind dummy? Where is it going to land? So that was me. I was the first of their four children. They raised me with a complete conviction that grace was the way that we ought to parent, because it modeled the way that God parents us.

So, now the wind dummy has landed into adulthood, and I'm raising my kids the same way, because I think the four of us Kimmel kids growing up this way, we proved that not only is this God's heart for how we ought to raise our kids, but it actually works.

Audra Haney: That's so powerful. And your father, Dr. Tim Kimmel, did a great job diving into grace based parenting and what it really is on one of our former episodes, but you felt called at some point in adulthood to build upon that work and write your own book, Grace Based Discipline. Tell me why you felt led to write that.

Karis Kimmel: Well, I've been with family matters on staff officially for almost ... it's going to come up on 10 years here in a couple of months. So I was speaking, I was conjoining my parents in leading seminars, and meeting with a lot of parents, interacting with them online, because I manage all of our social media and our blog and things like that. And what I heard so often was two things. Was first, people just wanted clear guidance of, okay, what do I do when my kid does this? What do I say when my kid says this? They wanted the script. They wanted a formula.

Unfortunately, that script and formula doesn't really exist. But secondly, I really often ... I would hear people pose a question that they would say, okay, how do you know whether or not to give my kids grace or discipline? They would put grace and discipline on opposite ends of the spectrum, as though you have to choose between grace or discipline. I kind of had an a-ha moment and I said, oh. People think that discipline is the opposite of grace, and they feel as though they have to choose between the two. And it's not. Discipline is a form of grace, and God disciplines us, and so we know because that's true that discipline is not the opposite of grace, because God cannot act any other way than to be gracious. That is his character. So I felt I needed to write this book to help people see that.

Audra Haney: I love that. And I found your book incredibly encouraging, because it's not so much about here's the formula for how you must discipline your children, but it's really the heart behind grace based discipline and the role it should play in the home. Can you give us a snapshot of what grace based discipline really is, what it looks like, and maybe also what it does not look like?

Karis Kimmel: Yeah. I think people, when they think of discipline, what they automatically go to, what their mind automatically goes to is the consequence part of discipline. Right? They think, okay, tell me how to discipline. They want to know, are you spanking or anti-spanking, right? What camp do you fall into there? They want that kind of information. Or should I do time-outs, or how do I approach this? And those are all valid questions. But they're skipping over the first nine tenths of discipline, right? The consequence piece is the very end piece, and it's part of a whole recipe of discipline.

Discipline is simply a discipleship process of our kids. Discipline and discipleship have the same root word for a reason. Sometimes, within discipline, we have to apply consequences to help teach and train our kids. But discipline is teaching and training. So you asked, "What is it not?" Discipline is not punishment. Punishment and discipline are different. I go into this in far more depth in my book, and I get into the theology of this, if anybody is interested, because remember that grace based discipline is simply disciplining our kids the way God disciplines us. It's asking the question, "How does God discipline us?" Because he tells us he disciplines those that he loves, and so punishment, though, is about retaliation. It's about getting even. It's about forcing someone to pay back whatever it is they took from a victim or from society. A punishment really has its focus on doing right by the victim. And it has its place, so I'm not saying it doesn't, especially in our world. We have a criminal justice system that is a punishment based system.

But in our homes, discipline is about restoration. It's about reformation. It's about doing right by the one who did the offense, right? Who did the thing. So we're actually focusing on the offender. I'm making air quotes here, although I think anybody with a two year old, it might be easy to think of your kid as an offender.

Audra Haney: Yes.

Karis Kimmel: Or a [perp 00:10:53], you know? You're just like, holy, this kid. And when you think about the parent child relationship, if your kid is the perpetrator or the offender, who is very often the victim of their behavior? Sometimes it might be a sibling or someone else, but very often, the victim is us. So if we are focused on punishment, we're actually doing it for our good and not for our kids' good. That's why we have to remember that discipline is all about them and doing what's in their best interest, for their eventual good.

Audra Haney: Oh, I love that. You know, one of your analogies, too, that I particularly loved that really helped me as a parent in the trenches was the basket analogy. Would you mind sharing about that, and what the goal of this basket visual is?

Karis Kimmel: Well, yeah. The basket is an analogy. It's also a visualization exercise that I teach parents. It's right in the intro of my book. It's on page seven or eight, something like that. It's very early on in my book, because I am realistic to know that especially for young parents, it's going to be hard for them to read a whole book. I wanted to be generous right away and give parents something that they could use, and that they could put into practice immediately, that was going to make a significant difference in the climate of their home, in their own emotions.

And so what this is, it's a visualization to help us get a hold of our emotions, to help us disconnect from our victimization, because very often, we're the victim, so to speak, of our kids' behavior, even if they're not doing what they're doing on purpose to victimize it. We have to choose not to take ... to victimize us. We have to choose not to take their behavior personally, even if it is. That is a key to ... We need to respond to our kids, rather than react to them. Reacting is what we will do if we don't know how to do something different. Because discipline is very response-based. Punishment is reactionary, right? So we're not trying to punish our kids. We're trying to discipline them.

What the basket is, is I say this is something you can do in the moment to help you get a hold of yourself. It's something you can do retroactively, if you've had a really hard day with one of your kids, but I ask you to imagine a basket or whatever container you want in your mind. You've got this basket in your mind. And I want you to visualize your kid, see your kid standing in front of you. I want you to visualize their behaviors. Whatever it is; hitting, refusing to sleep, not eating their food, being picky, back-talking. As they start to get older, it's other things like rebellion or unkind words, or back-talking, or defiance, disobedience. Things like that.

Imagine those behaviors as physical objects hanging off of your child, like a weight. In my mind, I see a weight that you put on the end of a fishing line, that kind of pulls it down, right? I imagine these hanging off of my child, and so in my mind, I take my basket, I walk over, and I just start pulling these behaviors off of my kids and putting them in this basket. And then I think about them one at a time. Okay, I'm pulling that picky eating off and I'm putting it in the basket. I'm pulling that refusal to nap off of my child and putting it in this basket. And then after you're done, I want you to imagine taking your basket, walking it into another room, and putting it up on a shelf. And then come back and look at your kid without all those things.

Audra Haney: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Karis Kimmel: Because what it does in the moment, and you can do this very quickly. My description of it took some time. In your mind, this is fast. You come back and you look at your child, take a deep breath, and you see their heart. It allows you to see your child the way that God sees them, because God does not see us through the lens of our unrighteousness and sin and behavior. Christ paid for all of those things on the cross. He atoned for all of those things, and that's what allows us to have a relationship with God in the first place, is that he now sees us through the lens of Christ's righteousness, and the grace that we were given, and he sees our heart, and it allows him to have a heart connection with us.

So when we can do this with our kids, it allows us to maintain a heart connection with them. It allows us to see them as our wonderful, beautiful children, and yes, they did those things. Later on in the book, I explained, look, I'm not telling you that the things you put in the basket don't matter and that you don't need strategies to deal with them. We're going to take that basket down off the shelf later, and we're going to start going through those things one at a time and analyzing them. But in this moment, you can't respond if you're frantic. You can't respond if you're angry. You can't respond if you're so hurt that you want to lash out.

So this is a tool that helps parents to quickly go into a mode where they can act like a first responder to their kids. Because our kids' behavior often lights a fire, metaphorically, in our home or in our ... You know, their behavior can feel like a crime scene sometimes. So we've got to be like those first responders that just come in calmly and do what needs to be done.

Audra Haney: Thanks for sharing that. I know that that exercise is going to change the atmosphere in a lot of homes. Karis, as we kind of wrap up for today, a word that I've heard you use a lot that I feel is so important is just relationship. Talk to me about relationship and why it is so important to set this atmosphere of grace in the home.

Karis Kimmel: It's primarily important for believers that we set an atmosphere of grace in our lives, not just in our homes, but in our lives. My dad is so good at explaining this. I'm sure he went into this in his interview with you, but so often, we think of grace as just saving us. That that's its role, is to save us. And it is its role to save us, but it doesn't stop there. It's not as though grace ends at the foot of the cross and then we walk away from it and into the rest of our lives. No, grace is intended to save us and then to sanctify and transform us. When we allow it to do that, it's going to start to permeate everything in our life.

And grace is radical. It is not the way that the world works. It's not our default mode. I would say the way that the world works is much more like karma. This concept of karma, that what you put out there comes back to you. What goes up comes down. That's kind of a law of the universe type of thing, but grace is so radical because it just flips that right on its head. And God says, "No, I'm not going to give back to you what you give to me, because what you give to me is sin, and what you often give to me is anger and defiance. No, I'm going to give you love. I'm going to give you favor. I'm going to give you rules and boundaries that are for your good."

So, we have this very unique opportunity as parents. And we have a very unique relationship with our children that will not be mimicked by any other relationship that they'll have in their whole lives. So we have a unique opportunity to make our relationship with them, and the atmosphere of our home and our lives, one of grace, where we give people undeserved favor. We give them love, we give them respect, we give them kindness, whether or not they deserve it. And very often, people don't deserve that from us, so we're making that choice in our homes to do that, and it's the best thing we can do to point our kids towards God's heart.

Audra Haney: That's so powerful. Thank you so much, Karis. I know that these insights and this wisdom has the potential, as it was for me, to be life-changing for so many parents.

Well, this has already been an incredible conversation with Karis, but we have so much to share with you next week as we talk about rules, boundaries, and activities to help your family implement grace based discipline into your own home. Remember, you can get today's show notes, transcript, and more information about your Newborn Promise Project at grahamblanchard.com.