**Newborn Promise Podcast**

***“Grace Based Parenting, Part 2” with Karis Kimmel Murray***

Audra Haney: Thanks for tuning in to the Newborn Promise Podcast, a production of Graham Blanchard Incorporated. You're listening to an interview with author Karis Kimmel Murray called Grace Based Discipline, Part Two. For today's show notes, transcript, or more information about your Newborn Promise Project, please visit grahamblanchard.com. Welcome back to the Newborn Promise Podcast. I am Audra Haney, and today I'm thrilled to bring you part two of our discussion with Karis Kimmel Murray about her book, Grace Based Discipline. Last week, Karis started a passionate and wisdom-packed conversation about how discipline and grace are inseparable and how the heart of our Heavenly Father shines when we set this tone in our homes. Karis really gave us a big-picture view of grace-based discipline and the theology behind her views, so please go back and catch it if you missed it.

Today, we ask Karis to dig even deeper, to get into the nitty-gritty, and share about some of the helpful and practical exercises in her book. These can really help parents celebrate all the unique personalities under their roof, set rules and boundaries as a family unit, and implement appropriate consequences without being driven by emotions. We really hope this conversation today helps you become, as she so perfectly puts it, a more prepared first responder to the discipline issues in your home. Karis, we are so excited to continue this conversation with you today about grace-based discipline. In your book, one thing you've really challenged parents to do when it comes to implementing discipline is to really know ourselves and our children. You have a lot of great exercises in your book for parents to accomplish this a little better. Would you mind just starting today by telling us a bit about your countries exercise?

Karis Murray: Yeah. In my book, I wanted my book to be a lot of big ideas, but then I wanted it to also be practical. I wanted to give parents very practical steps, things that they can do, to actually learn how to incorporate an atmosphere of grace into their home by doing, because I believe that the most powerful way we learn is by actually putting things into practice right away. One of the things about having a grace-based home is that we give the people that live within our home as much freedom as possible to live into the person that God created them to be, to live according to their sort of bent. Trust me, if you have any more than just yourself living in your home, you're going to recognize the fact that we're all different, like so different.

I mean, even a parent and a child that may have a lot of things in common, there's going to be some really distinct differences between them, and if you have more than one child, it's like you're never going to have two the same. You think you have one figured out, and then you have the second one, and it goes totally differently. I give parents a project called the Kids Flag Page. Now, I actually did not invent this, but my dad, Dr. Tim Kimmel, partnered with a ministry called Laugh Your Way. Mark Gungor heads up that ministry, Dr. Mark Gungor, and they created a ... It's almost a personality test. It's an in-depth personality profile that kind of discovers the countries. There are four countries that sort of mimic the four quadrants of personalities, so there's Control Country, there's Peace Country, there's Perfect Country, and there's Fun Country. Everybody's sort of, they have a home country where they primarily reside, and then they have an adopted country that sort of modifies their home country a little bit.

For example, I am fun control. My main country is fun. It matters most to me that everybody's having a good time, but my adopted country is control. I'm a firstborn. I'm not necessarily a Type A firstborn, but I'm still a firstborn, and so I don't really care that things are perfect. I don't care that people are doing things perfectly. I care that they're doing them my way. Right? Yeah, so easy. Just do what I'm telling you to do, and everything will be fine, right? While my husband is peace control, and my daughters are peace fun, and control fun, and so we're all different. This exercise that I kind of point you to in the book, you can order this for your kids from our ministry. You can do the Kids Flag Page and make those discoveries about your kids, but even if you don't purchase that product, I kind of lead you through a process of learning about your kids and so that you can let them sort of live under their flag and recognize our differences not as things that we ought to disparage, but as things to celebrate.

Audra Haney: That's such a cool exercise, and I think this deeper understanding of the dynamics in our homes could really resolve a lot of conflict on the front end. Another great suggestion you have is creating a family code. Talk to me about why you found it so important to create that in your home, and how has it helped you guys clarify your family rules, boundaries, and even goals?

Karis Murray: Yeah. This is the other project in my book that I lead people through, and this came about because I was in the process of writing this book, and I knew I really needed to help give some guidance on what rules should you have, because rules are important. God has rules and boundaries for us that He asks us to obey, and any grace-based parent is going to have rules, and so I thought, "Okay, well, we have some rules around our house. I wonder if my kids could tell me what they think the rules are. I know what I think they are, but I'm curious to know what they think they are," and so I kind of did a little impromptu experiment, and I asked them what the rules were.

My older one, and this is her personality, she seemed to think that everything that had annoyed me over the last week, or that I had asked her not to do, or that I had gotten upset with her for doing needed to be a rule, like, "Don't leave scissors on the couch," and, "Don't cut your hair and leave it in the sink." It's like, yeah, well, those are very specific. That's not exactly what I was thinking the rules were. Then I asked my younger one at a different time, and it was like she couldn't come up with anything that was a rule other than never turn down a chance to use the bathroom. I thought, "Well, that's a good principle, but that's not exactly where I was going." I was like, "Well, clearly my kids aren't clear on this, and if they're not clear on this, how can they stay within boundaries if they don't know what they are?"

That led us to a process of, "Hey, let's have a family meeting. Let's sit down. Let's have the Murray family summit. I'll make brownies. I'll let you eat all sorts of junk food that I don't normally let you eat as a means of bribery for you to sit down, and let's all talk together, my husband and I and our two girls, about rules, and let's start to brainstorm. What are some rules that we have? Let's start to list them. What rules, maybe, we haven't talked about, but we think we should have?" We started writing them down, and they ran the gamut. I mean, some were kind of ridiculous, and some were really good. We saw some very clear categories of rules. We saw some safety rules, things that had to do with keeping us safe. We saw some house rules, things that were more sort of like regulations. They were very specific to our family and our preferences, but they weren't things that could really be universal, but they were helpful. They're things that helped our home run smoothly.

Then we saw some things that were less rules, and they were more like moral or Biblical principles. When I saw that, I thought, "You know what? That's the key. All these other things, these are kind of written in pencil, and they need to be very flexible, because they have everything to do with our specific situation, but these Biblical principles, these moral rules, this is where we ought to really base our code." We came up with a list of 10 principles, basically, that our family lives by, because we saw that if we lived by these Biblical principles, and if we focused on building character, a lot of the other stuff just works itself out.

I also, I recommend to parents, have rules, but have as few as possible, because if you have too many nitpicky rules, it sets everybody up to fail. Nobody can be perfect all the time, and so you're going to be like a traffic cop constantly regulating behavior if you have too many nitpicky rules. Have some that are safety rules. Have some that are house rules, but focus your rules in your house in building Biblical character. Forgiveness, honesty, integrity, courage, things like that.

Audra Haney: That's so powerful, and as we do get these rules and boundaries, our family code's clarified, and we've taken the time to get to know our children, what does it now look like to respond to these behavior issues that need correcting with grace?

Karis Murray: Yeah, I think once you're kind of at that point where you've created this heart connection with your kids, your family is for the most part operating within a context of grace every day, that that has really sort of transformed your home, and you've got some clear rules and standards that you've just said, "Look, this is what is expected of all of us, parents included," and then you have a consistent sort of maybe rebellion against one of those principles. I would say that's when we step in, and obviously there's a lot of correction that happens when our kids are very young, because we're teaching them everything. For your listeners that are getting ready to be parents or who have young kids, your role at the beginning is going to be about getting them fed, getting them sleeping, teaching them proper communication, teaching them to share, teaching them to say please and thank you.

That's going to be your focus, but they are going to kind of come out of that, and you're going to see there is going to be a day where you're going to see sin manifest itself in your child, because we all give birth to, or adopt, sinners. That is the truth. All of us are sinners. We all have the capacity to sin, and even our young children do, so it shouldn't surprise us, it shouldn't shock us, although it still does, because we just think, "Oh, my gosh, my sweet baby just slapped her sister across the face," but it shouldn't shock us that our kids are sinful. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit has to transform their heart and get ahold of them, but we can come in and then apply some pressure in order to redirect and to reform and to correct our kids. Depending on their ages, we really have to, we have to base those consequences in their currency.

Audra Haney: Yes, and you do a great job of talking about these currencies, as you call them, in your book. Would you mind giving our listeners just a brief description of what you mean by that and how that kind of applies age by age?

Karis Murray: Obviously, when we're talking about consequences, we're kind of talking about negative consequences. I'm not really talking about ... Because consequences can be positive. If you're thinking of consequences as whatever it is happens based on a choice, obviously there are positive consequences for good choices. I'm more referring to some negative consequences that we administrate that we kind of give our kids. For very young kids, for I'm thinking toddlers about one and a half to three and a half years old, toddlers' currency is having things. They want to possess things, and if you have a toddler, you've seen this play out. Possessing objects, in particularly, in particular. If they can see it right now, in the moment, they assume it belongs to them, and they want to have it. This is just developmental, and so we can base a consequence in removing an object that our child wants to possess or removing them from the situation in which they are trying to possess the object. That is a very effective, quick consequence that plays into their currency.

For preschoolers, so this is about three and a half to five years old, their currency is doing. They want to possess objects, but then they want to be doing pleasurable activities, things that they find fun, so if you have to put some pressure on them for their behavior, you can take them away from doing the thing that they're wanting to do, or if they have the capacity to understand time a little bit, this is the older preschoolers, say, "I'm sorry, we cannot go to the park now," because you made that choice. School-age kids, it's being. It's being with, in relationships with people who they value, their friends. Teens, their currency is independence. If we're going to pick an appropriate and effective consequence, we have to understand what our kids' currency is, because it's not going to cost them anything emotionally if we try to remove or eliminate something that they don't value.

That also plays into understanding our kids and their countries, too, because that is, their personality is going to matter in what they value, and so that's why we do so much work in the book before we even get to the point of learning about consequences, because you have to know enough about your kid and where they're at to be able to pick an appropriate and effective consequence.

Audra Haney: You talk a lot about how we really have to do the hard work of evaluating each violation, and even our child's heart motivations, in this corrective process. Why is this so important?

Karis Murray: We have to stop and ask questions when we see ... If we see a pattern of behavior in our kids that is troublesome, and it's not just them doing things that are developmental. If they're just, they haven't grown out of their stupid yet, for a lot of their child yet, they're going to do stuff that we're just like, "I don't know why you did that. You don't know why you did that. Nobody knows why you did that. Trying to figure out why is futile. We just have to try to get you to 18 without going to the hospital too many times and without going to prison," just because kids do dumb stuff because they don't have fully formed prefrontal cortexes. But sometimes our kids act out because they're trying to meet a legitimate need in an illegitimate way. My dad talked a lot about inner needs. The need for security, for significance, for strength, for hope.

Our kids can also have physical needs they're trying to meet. This is especially true for parents of young kids. If they're hungry and tired, we call that hangry. They are going to act out. They just are. Probably the most powerful thing that you can do, remove them from the situation that they're in where they're acting out, say, "We cannot act this way, but I understand that you are hungry and tired. Let's give you a snack and put you down for a nap." Also, there can be special needs. I have a daughter who has ADHD, and so we went through a time period with her where so much of what we were dealing with was really her ADHD rearing its ugly head and totally dominating our home.

Once we saw that, I thought, "Look, I still have to correct her. I still have to redirect her. We still have to have the same standards of behavior, but there's a lot of things she's up against that she can't control right now, and I need to get her treatment. If I don't get her treatment, so much of what I'm doing is not going to have a chance to matter." You might also have something like that with your kids where you're going, "Look, they have some special needs, and I need to get them some help." Looking at their motivation also helps direct us to determine what things we need to focus on right now and what we can do to set our kids up for success.

Audra Haney: I love that, and you share that while consequences are so important, there are some things that can be destructive when it comes to our discipline. Can you share some things that should not come tagged onto our consequences?

Karis Murray: Yeah. I would say what we don't want to do is react based on our emotions. Emotions matter. They kind of act as a fire alarm for us, but we can't make our decisions purely based on emotion. When we do that, it almost always steers us toward doing what's best for us. We slip into kind of a fight or flight self-protection mode, and so we might yell. We might get angry to the point that we say or do things that harm our child that aren't right. We might actually react to something that annoys us a lot or bothers us a lot, but actually isn't a big deal in the long run. I think that's something that's so hard, because our kids throw so much at us every day. I mean, it's just coming in waves constantly. If you have more than one kid, they're both going for it all day long.

I have two strong-willed kids, and you have a strong-willed kid, if your kid's will, at some time, at times, is stronger than yours, which that's my definition. It's like, "How do you know if I have a strong-willed kid?" Well, is their will stronger than yours at times? Then yes, you have one. It's so easy to try to fight every battle, so we've got to pick our battles. We need to focus on what is going to be most important in the long run, because a lot of those things that annoy us are maybe actually our kid just living according to their country, but it's opposite of our country, and so we actually start to punish them for being who they are, so we're punishing them for things that we shouldn't be, or maybe we do need to ask them to modify their behavior a little bit, but we're overreacting to it. To respond, we've got to kind of come out of that fight or flight mode so that we can really think, and that's key.

Audra Haney: That's so good, and you know something that's really changed the tone of our home lately is that a lot of us can see these discipline issues, even early on, as a really inconvenient interruption in our family lives. I think there's a lot of power as we change our perspectives, and you really challenge parents to see discipline moments as opportunities for the Gospel. Tell me about your heart behind that.

Karis Murray: Yeah. I say in the book that our homes are laboratories for the Gospel. That is truly ... I mean, I get choked up just thinking about that, because the weight of that, the responsibility of that, I think weighs heavy on every parent's heart, and especially every Christian parent's heart. Our kids will experiment with faith under our roof, even if it doesn't look that way to us. They're looking at us, and they're saying, "Does your faith actually work?" That is this postmodern culture that we're in that I don't see going away any time soon. It used to be that you could tell people, "Because it is true, it will work. I'm telling you that this is true. It will work," and people would take that at face value.

Now, it's the opposite. The millennial generation and younger, my kids' generation, this next one coming up, they say, "If it works, then it's true. If I don't see it work, I don't believe it. I can't believe it," and so if we say we believe in a big God who is powerful, who is loving, who is kind, who gives us grace, but our kids don't see that actually playing out in how we interact with each other, how we interact with our neighbors, how we interact in our professions, if they don't see that actually working, then they're very unlikely to place their faith there. Obviously, this, ultimately, it's all the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is who changes hearts, and so we need to be praying for our kids every day that God will just pursue them like a lion and that He will find them, that He will chase them down, and not let them rest until they turn to Him. I pray that for my girls, and they have both given their hearts to the Lord. They're teenagers now. But they're looking at us. They'll know that grace transforms if they see it transform us.

Audra Haney: Wow, Karis, thank you so much. This is so challenging and yet so encouraging, and I can't imagine what an inspiration this is to brand new parents starting out. Karis, to close, would you mind just praying for these parents as they start or even continue this journey of grace-based discipline?

Karis Murray: Absolutely. Dear Father God, You are a good, good Father. You are a Father who loves, who is merciful, who shows kindness and favor and grace to us, Lord, and we need it. We need it so desperately. I just want to pray now for these new moms and dads who are staring down what feels like a barrel of parenting. Often, we're afraid. We're just so afraid that we're going to mess this up, that we're going to mess our kids up. We know how precious they are. We know how vital our role is. We know how much is at stake, Lord, and we're just terrified that we're going to mess it up. We come to You daily with just a desperation that You will fill us with Your grace, that Your grace will transform us, that it will give us peace, that it will bring us courage, knowing that You are a God who we can trust and that You, Lord, are bigger than anything that we will face.

Help us to remember that when it counts, Lord, and as we raise these sweet, precious children that You've given us, as we prepare to send these legacies into a world that many of us likely won't see, they get to reach into the future and make a difference, Lord, just grant us Your grace, that we won't feel like we have to do any of this in our own power, but that Your power will fill us, Lord. We love You. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Audra Haney: Thank you so much for joining us again. We pray these episodes with Karis have made you feel more confident, equipped, and inspired to implement grace-based discipline in your own home. Please join us again next week as we talk with marriage and family therapist Kelsey Myers from the Center of Being Known about your child's amazing brain in the first few years of life. Remember, you can get today's show notes, transcript, and more information about your Newborn Promise Project at grahamblanchard.com.