

Parenting: Strengths and Love with an Emotional Focus

Session One: What Are Our Strengths and How Do I Use Them?

Prayer

Good and Gracious Heavenly Father, thank you for this time and for the gift of parenthood. Please bless all those watching this video, and all of those who have put time and effort into shedding a little light and insight into lives of the people of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. We ask that you bless the videos and bless families through your precious name, Lord Jesus. Amen.

Three Themes of Parenting from Pope Francis

1. **“God allows parents to choose the name by which he himself will call their child for all eternity”**
The beauty of parenthood is the ability to share in God’s creative work!
2. **“Each child has a place in God’s heart from all eternity; once he or she is conceived, the Creator’s eternal dream comes true...”²**
From the beginning of time God was dreaming of us and our children! He was excited for us to come into reality!
3. **“For nine months every mother and father dreams about their child... You can’t have a family without dreams. Once a family loses the ability to dream, children do not grow, love does not grow, life shrivels up and dies.”³**
We get to dream with God about our children.

Main objective of this program: Be reminded of the deeper realities of life. We are not alone! God is working in us, with us, and through us as we raise our children!

Discussion Question:

As you reflect on being a dream of God from the beginning of time, how does that strike you or inspire you? How does that affect your attitude about parenting and family life?

¹ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 166

² Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 168

³ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 169

The Family

- The Family is the first school of human values, where we learn the wise use of freedom.⁴ “If we want to change the world, we must go home and love our families” as St. Teresa of Calcutta is famously quoted as saying! Our family is how we will change the world; family is the nucleus of society.
- The real question is not where our children are physically, or whom are they with at any given time, but rather where they are existentially, where they stand in terms of their convictions, goals, desires, and dreams.⁵

Strengthsfinder⁶

Temperament is who we are and how God designed us. There are no two people who have ever been the same, not even twins or triplets. Our individuality is a “miracle.”⁷

Reflection

Psalm 139:13-16: You formed my inmost being; you knit me in mother’s womb. I praise you, because I am wonderfully made; wonderful are your works! My very self you know. My bones are not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, fashioned in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw me unformed; in your book all are written down; my days were shaped, before one came to be.⁸

Take a moment here, pause the video, and reflect on this scripture passage. What does this scripture mean to you?

John Gottman⁹

John Gottman has over 40 years of research in the field of couples, marriages and families. He was voted as one of the top 10 Most Influential Therapists of past quarter century in *Psychotherapy Networker*.

Emotions and Meta Emotions

Meta Emotions = How people feel and think about emotions and feelings.

Emotions are supposed to be felt and expressed = Think of John 11:35 “Jesus Wept”¹⁰ or John 2: 17 “The zeal for thine house hath eaten me up.”¹¹

⁴ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 274

⁵ Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, no. 261

⁶ Mary Reckmeyer & Jennifer Robison, *Strengths Based Parenting: Developing Your Children’s Innate Talents* (New York: Gallup, 2016).

⁷ Reckmeyer & Robison, *Strengths Based Parenting*, 2

⁸ Ps. 139: 13-16 (NAB)

⁹ John Gottman, *Emotion Coaching: The Heart of Parenting* (Seattle: The Gottman Institute, 2013)

¹⁰ John 11:35 (NAB)

¹¹ John 2:17 (KJV)

Emotional Intelligence vs. Intellectual Quotient

Emotional Intelligence = the ability to identify emotions, understand your emotions, respond to and empathize with other's emotions, and do so with appropriate behaviors and social constructs. Emotional Intelligence is greater predictor of adulthood success.¹²

Emotion Regulation = the ability to manage emotions and feelings. Regulation is the ability to self-soothe and/or calm down after vigorous play or a frustrating situation; the ability to re-focus attention.

Social Relationships = the ability to get along with others, make friends, and get along with adults.

Gottman's Parenting Types: Emotion Dismissing/Disapproving vs. Emotion Coaches¹³

Emotion Coaches help their children how to be emotionally intelligent. They take emotional moments as opportunities for connection and intimacy, and help their children understand themselves better and how to regulate those emotions.

Parents that dismiss or disapprove of emotions see negative or difficult emotions as dangerous, toxic, or uncomfortable.

Reflection Question:

Jesus shows his wounds! What does the term "sharing wounds" mean to you? How do you feel about vulnerability in parenting?

Wrap-up and Closing

Homework = Complete the Strengths Finder inventory for next week's discussion. Also complete the 5 love languages inventory which can be taken for free at www.5lovelanguages.com. Be prepared to discuss your love language and your child(ren)'s love language(s).

¹² Gottman, *Emotion Coaching: The Heart of Parenting*, 19.

¹³ Gottman, *Emotion Coaching: The Heart of Parenting*, 19-21.