Michelle: If you’re a parent of a teen, you know many times they want the latest: the latest that’s shiny, the latest that’s fast, and the latest that’s popular. Well, Lindsey Carlson says that she knows that you, as a parent, need God’s wisdom.

Lindsey: There are certain things that my daughter might be really interested in that I think are really great pursuits, because they’re going to feed her wonder and fascination of who God is; and then there are other things that I feel like would just be distracting. Those things might not distract one of my sons; but for her, I know that it’s very alluring. I think you have to know your kid to know, “What are the things that are going to be the most easily distracting?”

Michelle: Lindsey Carlson is going to help us understand how to raise our kids in life—but most importantly in faith—on this edition of FamilyLife This Week.

Welcome to FamilyLife This Week. I’m Michelle Hill. Last week, at the end of our show, I mentioned, “If you have a teenager right now, there are days that, well, you might love them; and there are days that you probably plead with God for enough love not to scream at them”; because raising teens is hard.

You know, as a parent, you’re seeing these years left to guide and direct them in your home—well, they’re limited/they’re coming to an end. You’re asking yourself, “What is the one thing I want them to leave my home with?—a good work ethic?” Well, yes; that’s why they do their chores. “…—good manners?”—well, yes, that’s why you’ve worked so hard to instill that in them. And you want them to be good citizens, but is that all? Yes, I know, you’re probably thinking right now, “Michelle, you’ve forgotten the most important thing.” You want them to love God and to know Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Well, recently, I talked with my friend, Lindsey Carlson. Lindsey is a mom; but she’s also an author of a brand-new book entitled, Growing in Godliness: A Teen Girl’s Guide to Maturing in Christ. She had some great answers on just: “How do we help our kids understand the love of God?” You know, I really love Lindsey. We’ve been friends for several years now. I think she just has some great advice on how to help our kids grow. Here’s my conversation with Lindsey Carlson.

[Previous Interview]
Michelle: So, Lindsey, what are your hopes and dreams for your daughter, Madeline?

Lindsey: Wow! That’s a loaded question.

You know, I think that moms, generally, have some kind of dream version of their daughter, like, “Oh, she’ll be just like me,” or “Oh, she won’t be anything like me,”—

Michelle: Yes.

Lindsey: —or “She’ll participate in this activity or that activity.”

I feel like, because I’m walking with Christ, my dreams for her have really always just been that she would pursue the Lord with a pure heart—you know?—and really just want to know God and make Him known. That can look really, really different however the Lord calls her to live.

I think it has allowed me to kind of let go of the: “This is what my wedding will look like when I grow up,” “This is what my daughter will look like when I grow up,”—and to really just cling to that understanding of: “Come, Lord Jesus. Make Yourself known in her life. Call her to do what You’ve called her to do. Help me to just walk beside her and hold her hand.”

Michelle: —which really gives her freedom. You have not put her in a box; you haven’t limited her in any way; you have just asked her to live her life before Christ.

Lindsey: Yes; and I won’t say that that’s been an easy road to walk. I mean, there was, definitely in the early days, a letting go of/I don’t need to shape her to fit the mold I think that she should fit in order to fulfill my dreams of motherhood. I need to say: “Thank You, Lord, that my child is captured by how amazing animals are!” “Thank You, Lord, that she loves to play in the dirt,” “Thank You, Lord, that she has this gift.”

But I think that, you know, it’s always kind of a letting-go process: trying to see what the Lord is doing and thanking Him for how He has made her uniquely.

Michelle: You know, there’s probably a mom right now, who’s listening and saying, “Letting go process—what did that look like?”

Lindsey: I think it’s walking by the Spirit and keeping in mind, when you look at Scripture: “What are scriptural mandates for obedience to the Lord, and what are preferences?” It’s not in the Scripture that my daughter needs to wear a bow on her head. It’s not more pleasing to God if she chooses dolls over dinosaurs. I think the Lord has used parenting a lot to work out a lot of my control-freak tendencies that were unholy. [Laughter]

Michelle: I’ve heard that a lot!
Now, in your book, *Growing in Godliness*, it's a beautiful book for young ladies. I know that Madeline was the reason why you wrote that. Why did you write a book for her?

Lindsey: I started thinking about this book when she was approaching her 13th birthday; because I think that I had this kind of overwhelming sense of: “Time seems to be speeding up really fast.”

Michelle: Yes.

Lindsey: When she was approaching 13, I kind of had this moment of like, “Gosh! I’ve been doing all I have known to do, but there still seems to be so much more that I want to tell her. How do I put myself in her life in a way that can say, ‘Hey, as you’re heading into middle school and then high school, here are the things that are the most important things. It’s not math; it’s not reading; it’s not driving a car; it’s not makeup tutorials. The most important thing that you need to know is how to grow in godliness.’”

Michelle: Yes.

Lindsey: So just for her communication preferences, I think I kind of thought, “You know, I think that would be a really special/like a really cool birthday present—to just write to her and surprise her with it.” That was really, honestly, all that I set out to do—but then the more that it formed, the more I kind of thought, “You know, I wish I had had this kind of book when I was a teenager.”

Michelle: You know, as I read your book, I felt *that*—that you were trying to be practical; but yet, you were trying to paint this picture of God to say: “He is your All-in-all. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords,”—and trying to also say—“Okay, it’s not math; it’s not Facebook®, it’s not Instagram®, or TikTok®, or wherever you’re residing these days. There is something so much bigger and so much greater.”

In your first chapter, you talk about the before and after pictures in our lives. Share that with us; what does that look like?

Lindsey: I think that our before picture is, obviously, we are dead in sin and following the course of the air. We need help! The before picture—I actually used the metaphor in my book of—do you remember Glamour Shots? [Laughter] Were you in the Glamour Shots generation?

Michelle: I was in the Glamour Shots generation! I never had a Glamour Shot; I always wanted one! That was—

Lindsey: Well—

Michelle: —you know—

Lindsey: Exactly!
Michelle: —you became the “in” person if you—

Lindsey: Yes, exactly! That’s probably the only reason I wanted it, because it was like the trendy thing when I was in fifth grade or whatever it was.

Michelle: Yes.

Lindsey: If you’re not familiar with them— you would essentially go to the mall, and they’d dress you up in these ridiculous costumes, and spray your hair huge, and put tons of makeup on you; you know? Then take these dramatic pictures, where you’re supposed to look like a model. Really, if you’re a fifth grader, and they’re doing that with you— like, my teeth were like all jagged, because I hadn’t had braces yet, you know? I had acne, probably; I don’t know. I just kind of look like a 13-year-old realtor, you know?—like it was very right.

Michelle: Yes; right.

Lindsey: I think that that’s kind of what we tend to try to do with growing in godliness. We know that it seems cool to seem grown up. We want maturity, naturally; and we want to be impressive to other people; and we want to seem like we’ve developed skills that we may not have actually developed. In the process of trying to look impressive to other people, we try to fake maturity: we try to pretend that we don’t gossip; we try to pretend that we’re not struggling with anger, or lust, or greed, or whatever it may be in our heart; but it doesn’t look real, because it isn’t real.

When we think about the before and the after picture, we know that, when we come to faith in Christ, that He is going to conform us to this image and that He makes all things new; but we really, really, desperately want Him to do it immediately, with the flip of a switch. When He doesn’t, it’s very easy to get disappointed and think: “Oh, well, maybe I’m not really saved,” or “Maybe I don’t know Jesus,”—to miss the fact that that change comes in the transformative process of sanctification over time.

So rather than seeing yourself as: “Well, I professed faith—I walked an aisle; checked a box/I prayed a prayer—I should look like Jesus today, and I’m still struggling with my sin,” we need to see that as an invitation to grow and understand that the after picture, where we’re completely made new and look completely like Christ, is not until the very end, when Jesus returns and makes the whole world new. That doesn’t mean that we just settle for the yucky parts that still exist in our hearts; but it does mean that we need to strive to change, little by little by little, and develop that maturity, progressively, over time.

Michelle: You know, Lindsey, when I was young—let’s go back to my teenage years— learning about God was the last thing on my list; it was the very last thing on my list. As I’ve grown, of course, it’s become—not always the first thing like it should be—but it’s up on the list a lot more.
As I’ve become a Sunday school teacher, or a teacher in some way, I’ve watched little kids, like kindergarteners—they’re so excited about God—but then, once you work up through the high school years, they’re kind of like, “Oh, yes; we’ve heard this all before.” How do you, as a mom, continue to instill excitement into Madeline and into other girls that you are mentoring?

Lindsey: That’s a really good question. You know, I feel like, a lot of times—when teenagers have kind of lost that sparkle for following Jesus and are kind of unimpressed by the gospel—I think sometimes it can be indicative that they’ve just gotten distracted by worldly pursuits. You know, the world outside of our front door is very flashy; it’s very attractive. Satan makes sure that we want to look at it, and we want to follow it.

I think that, as parents, anything we can do to remind them that the pleasures of the world are fleeting: that they’re not real, and that they don’t satisfy, and not feeding the things that we know our kids are specifically wired to lust after and to chase after. There are certain things that my daughter might be really interested in that I think are really great pursuits, because they’re going to feed her wonder and fascination of who God is; and then there are other things that I feel like would just be distracting. I think you have to know your kid to know, “What are the things that are going to be the most easily distracting?”

I think another part of it is that you have to make faith so relevant for your daily life and deeds that there’s not a way to separate it from your daily life. When we’re regularly talking about the need for God, and the need for Christ’s forgiveness, and the need to be made new, and the need to repent, and the need to ask forgiveness—all of these things—it becomes such a daily language that you’re just more aware of your need. When you’re aware of your need, I think that—maybe that’s the key—when you’re aware of that need, that fuels the desire to look for God; because you’re like, “I know I can’t do this in my own strength. I know I need God; He is bigger than I am,” and “I need to understand Him, because I cannot do this without Him.”

I think a lot of teenagers don’t have that because their parents care, honestly, so well for them that they don’t know need. They don’t know what it’s like to not have something or to not be in control of a situation. Sometimes, just allowing them to feel that need, and then pointing them to Jesus, Who will meet the need, maybe makes that more necessary to chase after.

Michelle: Yes.

[Studio]

Michelle: You’re listening to my conversation with Lindsey Carlson. Isn’t she so encouraging to help you understand your teen, and how to better share Christ with them? She wrote the book, Growing in Godliness: A Teen Girl’s Guide to Maturing in
Christ. We’re going to hear more encouragement from her, but we need to take this break. I’ll be back in two minutes.

[Radio Station Spot Break]

Michelle: Welcome back to FamilyLife This Week. I’m Michelle Hill. Today, we’re talking with Lindsey Carlson, author of Growing in Godliness: A Teen Girl’s Guide to Maturing in Christ. Here’s Part Two of my conversation with Lindsey.

[Previous Interview]

Michelle: Lindsey, I’m going to read for you a series of questions that you have in your book, Growing in Godliness:

How do you respond when God answers, “No,” to a prayer request, or gives you something other than what you’ve asked for, or leads you through an unwelcome challenge or trial?

Do you ever feel angry, fearful, or anxious when you don’t know what the future holds?

Do you worry God’s forgotten you?

Have you ever tried to take over for Him or attempted to manipulate Him into giving you what you want?

Lindsey: Yes.

Michelle: Okay, those are all questions that, like, I fight all the time!

Lindsey: Absolutely! [Laughter] I do too! So I knew how to ask them!

Michelle: As I’m reading this, I’m like, “Okay, first of all, this is speaking to me; because I ask all those questions all the time.” That is such a hard thing to answer for a teenager: to wait/to humbly wait on Him for that answer or to know, if what we’ve asked for, is in His will. That’s hard! How do you talk to a child about that?

Lindsey: Well, I think it’s essential to talk to kids about this. I can think about—even when my kids were very, very young, you know, you have a fish that starts to get sick or something—you know, if you pray for the fish to live, and then the fish dies overnight, does that teach your kids that God isn’t good because He allowed your fish to die? Well, that is a prime set-up to teach your kids practical theology.

Michelle: Yes.
Lindsey: Your kids need practical theology, because everything that they’re learning and taking in is teaching them something. When you and I, you know, listen to Christian radio, or listen to a sermon when we go to a friend’s church, or we talk to a friend who says something in passing, all those little things and bits and pieces that we’re hearing are piling up as pieces of information that are forming what we think to be true about God. If we are reading—I even think about signs at Hobby Lobby® or something, that have a nice-sounding phrase on it that—you know, says “Blessed,” or something—you know? It’s completely not tied to any Bible verse or anything, but we start to make assumptions about what that must mean.

When we’ve gathered all these things from random sources—and we don’t necessarily know if they’re tied to Scripture, or if they’re someone’s opinion, or a misinterpretation of Scripture, or anything like that—we need someone to come in and give us a solid base to say, “Okay, this is actually what God’s Word says,” and “When He’s talking about this in Scripture, this is who He is talking to,” or “…this is what He is talking about. This doesn’t say that God is going to give you all the desires of your heart if you want a race car and a mansion, and you know, a husband and three girls.” We make these extravagant lists of things; and then we bring in all this terrible, faulty understanding of Scripture to the table; then we think God is unkind, or ungracious, or that God is not providing for us.

If we can take kids and meet them in subjects that they understand—we don’t have to use big words like “theology,” “sanctification,” “regeneration”—I mean, we can; that’s great—but we can also just say: “You know what? It hurts when God doesn’t answer in the way that we want Him to; doesn’t it? It’s sad. Did you know, though, that God says, even when you’re sad, He will be with you?—and that He will comfort you?—and that, when He sends the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit will be your comforter? What does that look like for God to comfort you?” I mean, these are the prime ways that we engage kids in spiritual language and start to build biblical understanding of God’s good character and Who He is.

Michelle: And it sounds like what you’re building on, also, is to open your child’s eyes to the fact that the Bible is truth. Every single word in the Bible is truth. That’s a mindset that we’re having a hard time trying to break. As you’re talking, you’re saying, “Okay, God is truth!” Help a parent understand just how we can continue to instill that fact into our kids’ lives: that the Bible is our authority.

Lindsey: Yes; that one, I think, is one of the most important things that you, as a parent, have to settle in your own heart; because it will be behind every conversation that you have with your kids about faith; because they are growing up in a generation that tells them that there is no truth: “Truth is up to you. You make it; you decide it. Everything is shift-able.”

When your kids are growing up in a world that says, “You do you!”—like: “Make your own decisions,” “Live your truth,”—all of these things—they also have access to the internet. If my son does not know how to bake something, he Google®s it. Five minutes
later, he thinks he’s the Iron Chef; because he can make chocolate chip muffins. [Laughter] And then he gets surprised, when he doesn’t follow the instructions the right way, and it turns out, you know, flat muffins or salt-less muffins, or whatever it is. This happens all the time!

Teaching our kids that, just because you type something into an internet search engine, or ask someone who has been given a position of authority/like a teacher, does not mean that the answer that they are going to give you is actually good and true. I think that’s when we can turn our kids to the Proverbs and say, “Look how much God has shown us about: ‘What does wisdom looks like?’ “What does foolishness looks like?’ and ‘How do we determine which is which?”

I think that, if we just kind of leave our kids to their own devices, they’re going to decide a lot of unbiblical things are good and true. It is our responsibility to say, “There is absolute truth that exists. It can be known and found; this is how you find it…” Engage with their arguments and their questions.

It’s tempting to be impatient—

Michelle: Yes.

Lindsey: —when they do come home with questions. My kids were in public school; they would frequently hear teachers say things as fact that were not what our family believes to be found in Scripture. We would talk with them about that: “Why do you think that that’s not true?” and “Where do you think it says that?” and “How does that contradict the Bible?” and “What do you think that that’s asking them to believe that they’re not considering?—like they may say it as fact, but they’re assuming a lot of things that they have to have faith in to believe what they’re believing.”

We just try to talk with our kids about that so that they’re prepared to have those conversations when they go back to school or when they talk with their friends. It’s not like, “Oh, my goodness! I didn’t think through that question!” They know there are answers to these things. I may not know where they are, and I might not know it off the top of my head; but it can be found!

Michelle: Yes.

Lindsey: And Scripture is where I need to turn to find it. So now, I have an understanding also of the importance of why I need my kids to be versed and very aware of the importance of Scripture being deeply rooted in their lives, so that they know where to go/know where to turn for answers.

Michelle: Have you seen a difference in Madeline’s life after she read the book you wrote for her?

Lindsey: It’s hard to tell what she got from just parenting,—
Michelle: Yes, I’m sure.

Lindsey: —and just things that we’re already living, and the book. I do think she has read it; maybe twice. You know, I think that you can read—any book you can read—and get different things out of it each and every time.

I think that the sweetest thing that I have seen her take away from reading the book has been that she has found it a fun tool to share with friends. It’s one thing, if you say to your friends, “Hey, let’s talk about Jesus,” or “Hey, read this book with me.” Especially, we live in the Mid-Atlantic, so it’s not a super-Christian culture. It’s not real popular to say, “Hey, let’s study the Bible after school!”—

Michelle: Right.

Lindsey: —she’s really out on a limb when she does that—but it’s a lot more interesting and intriguing to people when she says, “Hey, did you know my mom is a published author? She wrote me this book! Would you want to talk about it?”

I didn’t think that a teenager would want to do that kind of thing, and she has been able to do that. We actually just had one of her friends—who we’ve been friends with for about five years, who is about her age—she read the book. They had started to have very interesting conversations about faith, and she actually just came to faith this summer.

Michelle: Wow!

Lindsey: To see the way that they have interacted over that book,—

Michelle: Yes.

Lindsey: —without me even—like I didn’t set it up; I didn’t get into it—she just took this book; gave it to her; she read it; and she said, “Hey, let’s talk about it.” Then the Lord progressed the story.

Michelle: Yes.

Lindsey: The Lord did all these things in her life, completely apart from me and my daughter. That’s what is so beautiful to me about truth—

Michelle: Right.

Lindsey: —it’s that when you present God’s Word, you allow God’s Word to do the work. I love that this book is a tool—

Michelle: Yes.
**Lindsey:** —that any parent can pick up and hand to either their kid, or a girl in their youth group, or someone that they know who might need to hear God’s Word. God is the One doing the heavy lifting, no matter what they read on the page.

**Michelle:** Yes; that is so encouraging; that is so neat to hear.

Lindsey, thank you so much for joining me today. This has been a joy to talk to you about how to grow in godliness and how to help our kids.

**Lindsey:** Thank you for having me.

[Studio]

**Michelle:** Wasn’t that an encouraging conversation with Lindsey Carlson? You know, if you want more information on Lindsey’s ministry, go to our website, FamilyLifeThisWeek.com; that's FamilyLifeThisWeek.com. We have a link there.

Hey, coming up next week, we are going to talk with worship leader, Justin Unger; and we’re going to talk about just why he has a passion for the local church. That’s next week on *FamilyLife This Week.*

Thanks for listening! I want to thank the president of FamilyLife®, David Robbins, along with our station partners around the country. And a big “Thank you!” to our engineer today, Keith Lynch. Thanks to our producer, Marques Holt. Justin Adams is our mastering engineer, and Megan Martin is our production coordinator.

Our program is a production of *FamilyLife Today,* and our mission is to effectively develop godly families who change the world one home at a time.

I’m Michelle Hill, inviting you to join us again next time for another edition of *FamilyLife This Week.*