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## Finding Peace in Parenting

Guest: Eryn Lynum  
From the series: 936 Pennies (Day 2 of 2)  
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**Bob:** Eryn Lynum learned an important lesson as she was raising her firstborn. She began to realize that as his mom, she could influence what really matters most to him.

**Eryn:** We really decided to be more intentional around screen time when he was about four years old. It's a struggle at first, but at this point, now, he would actually default to playing outside or to reading a book. When I do allow it, when I ask him to turn it off, there is no argument. He just slips it off. Now, the three-year-olds—that would be a different story. There are still some tantrums, but we have stuck with this long enough that he just knows that—"No, it's a treat. It's not something to feast on."

**Bob:** This is *FamilyLife Today*. Our host is Dennis Rainey, and I'm Bob Lepine. Part of our job as moms and dads is to point our kids toward things that will help them flourish and limit those things that might not be as beneficial.

We'll talk more about that today with Eryn Lynum. Stay with us.

And welcome to *FamilyLife Today*. Thanks for joining us. In an average week, when you were raising your children, how many moments of purpose were there in that week? Do you know what I'm talking about? As opposed—

**Dennis:** Bob, if I answer that question, it means I have to review. [Laughter]

**Bob:** Every week.

**Dennis:** I have to review all the weeks—

**Bob:** Oh, no, no, no.

**Dennis:** —of 29 years of raising our kids—

**Bob:** You don't have to do that. I'm just talking in general.

**Dennis:** —and sequentially put them in order.

**Bob:** I'm trying to help parents get an idea here. When you think about being purposeful and intentional as a parent, is that a daily task, or is that something where you go—"You know we need to do something purposeful this week or this month?"

**Dennis:** It's a grid. It's a grid.

**Bob:** Okay.

**Dennis:** I don't think you can make it a checklist. I think you have to put it as a grid. So when you are running errands, you're looking for ways to teach your kids. When you're headed to church after you've had a fight about getting into the car on time, you then talk about forgiveness. So, it's a spiritual purpose at that point.

**Bob:** You're saying this is a mindset you need to develop—

**Dennis:** It is.

**Bob:** —as a parent so that you are always asking the question: "Do I have an opportunity to be intentional here?"

**Dennis:** That's exactly right. We have a guest with us who I believe would wholeheartedly say that's what she does. Eryn Lynum joins us again on *FamilyLife Today*. Welcome back.

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

**Dennis:** Do you agree?

**Eryn:** Oh, yes; yes, I certainly agree. It is about that mindset / that heart-set / that perspective more than what we do.

**Dennis:** She has written a book called *936 Pennies: Discovering the Joy of Intentional Parenting*. It all came about as a result of your second child being dedicated at church. Explain that to our listeners again, if you would, please.

**Eryn:** Yes, of course. We were having our son dedicated and vowing before our church—that we would raise him to know and follow the Lord by God's grace and help; and our pastor gave us a jar of pennies—*936 pennies*—and explained that each one represents one week that you have with your child between birth and 18. So, it's this concept of learning to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom in that context of parenting.

**Dennis:** Since we talked earlier, I thought that was really wise of your pastor because if he had given you a jar full of pennies for the days, that would have been over 50,000 pennies.

**Eryn:** I think we would have gone over budget that year in church.

**Bob:** That's right. Nobody would have been able to carry that one home. That would have been way too heavy.

**Dennis:** No, that's exactly right.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Dennis:** I think the imagery here is a great image. In fact, it'd make a great gift for parents of newborns—to give them a jar—and also give them a copy of Eryn's book, *936 Pennies*. We asked you earlier, Eryn, "Where in your book"—"What topics have you found that parents most identify with?" You listed two. The first being parents finding peace—what are you talking about there?

**Eryn:** Well, I know for me, as a parent of young children—but really parents in any season—peace is hard to come by; and I believe that one of Satan's biggest strategies against families is uprooting the peace of parents because we are called to peace—the Scriptures say.

For me, it all came about when I was reading one day in Proverbs; and Proverbs 12:20 says, "Those who plan for peace have joy." That little word in there—"Those who *plan* for peace"—changed my perspective because I realized, especially in this current season of mine, that peace is not arrived at on a whim or a wish. It is certainly something we have to make a strategy toward.

**Dennis:** Let's define what you mean by peace.

**Bob:** Yes, are you talking about tranquility, or are you talking about—

**Dennis:** Contentment?

**Bob:** —reconciled relationships? What peace are you talking about?

**Dennis:** Are you talking about peace and quiet?

**Eryn:** Yes, I know.

**Dennis:** That is what my mom would have said when I was a boy.

**Eryn:** Definitely, tranquility makes me laugh a little bit because I picture my home. [Laughter] That's not at all what I believe it is because there is so much mess and chaos and noise in parenting. Parenting is meant to be messy because it's meant to show us that Jesus meets us right there in the mess.

So, for me, it has been this—“Okay, what is the peace that Christ calls us to? What does that look like amidst the mess and amidst the chaos? What does it look like that when I am struggling in my parenting with big questions / with frustrations / with impatience? What does it look like to be rooted in Christ?”

Another verse that really struck me in this manner is Psalm 103. It says that—“As for man, he is but grass. As a flower, he flourishes. The wind passes, and it is swept away.”

So, for me, it was that vision of—we are but handbreadths. It comes back to that element of time. Our lives are fleeting; but for me, it was those three words: “So he flourishes” / so she flourishes.

So, when I look at my life and I realize that my days are numbered, what does it look like to flourish in my motherhood? And the roots of that word can mean to gleam. What does it look like as a mother to gleam for my children / for my husband? So, it’s not being shaken by the circumstances of my everyday life. It’s not being overwhelmed by everything that needs to get done and by the rush and the pace of the society. It is being rooted in my identity in Christ.

**Bob:** Well, there is a lot about being a parent that can disrupt your peace and that can create anxiety and stress—can cause you to wonder if you are really anchored in something that is going to help you hang on. Have you felt that as a mom?

**Eryn:** Oh my goodness—yes. It made me think about when my daughter was born. So, she’s four-months-old today, and the end of my pregnancy was very rocky. I went in at 33 weeks pregnant with some minor contractions, and they admitted me straight away and nearly took her out via C-section. My husband and I were there overnight. Her heart was not doing well, and the doctor was very concerned. They released me the next day, but they watched me and my daughter like a hawk for the rest of the pregnancy. She made it to 37 weeks.

But that first night in the hospital, being so shaken up, not knowing how my baby’s doing, and those weeks—four weeks of constant monitoring and—“Is she okay,” and “Is she not?”—I felt the presence and the peace of God, probably, in a deeper way than I ever have before. I just knew that He was there and that He calls us not to fear but to boldly approach Him on the behalf of our children and believe in Him for miracles because He is a God of miracles; and that—that can certainly give you peace.

**Dennis:** Eryn, I’m going back to the verse you read earlier. I just want to read it to our listeners again: “Those who plan peace have joy.” You don’t plan peace in the middle of those four weeks. You’re going to the bank on what you have built into your soul—your knowledge of who God is, your knowledge of Scripture, how you have built it into your heart and your mind—and you are also basing it on your faith which you have exercised over and over and over again throughout your adult life.

What I want our listeners to hear: “You don’t build a roof that prevents the rain coming into your house in the middle of the storm.”

**Eryn:** Right.

**Dennis:** “You’ve got to build in anticipation of the storm, and they will happen.”

**Eryn:** Yes. Yes; certainly. For me, a big strategy that helped me—to just return to that peace in Christ or in that scary time was meditating on ways He has been faithful in the past. You see that all throughout Scripture. Our God has a history of faithfulness. So, looking back to His faithfulness in the Scripture and looking back and listing out specific ways—writing down specific ways that He has been faithful to me and my family—and that does so much that in those moments you have that foundation of God’s faithfulness to fall back on.

**Bob:** That’s a great strategy. What else have you done—or if you were sitting down with a young, anxious mom right now, and she said, “How do I get to the peace that is lacking my life,” what would you tell her?

**Eryn:** In the book, I map out this strategy I began after I read that verse in Proverbs: “Those who plan for peace have joy”; and I mention that word, plan, is the one that struck me. So, I thought, “What does it look like to plan for peace?”

For me, it’s a two-step process. First I need to put a name to the things that are uprooting my peace and specifically name them. I call these my peace thieves. Once I have named those—that’s a powerful thing. If begins to strip them of their power because then I can make a strategy to combat those.

What this has specifically looked like in my life is: I sit down once a month, and I take a good look at my heart and a good look at my home and my circumstances. I ask myself, “What is uprooting my peace?” Things that have been on my list have been looking at my phone too often, checking my email too often. There are a lot of them around technology.

Another one of mine was my snooze button in the mornings because I knew—especially with young children—if I could get up just a little bit before them and spend some time in the Word and in prayer and in worship, the whole culture of my home would change. There would be a lot more peace; but I just kept hitting that snooze button like religion until there are children on top of me asking me why breakfast is not made. That’s not a peaceful way to start your day.

But once I had some of those named, I was able to say, “Okay, what small changes in my life would make that a different scenario?” So, for me, it has meant getting up before the kids; and that is still a struggle, but it’s on my plan. So, I keep working at it. There

have been small ones like going on family walks after dinner. So, we like to do things like writing on to our calendar when we're going on hikes or when we're going camping. So, we make sure that it happens.

I'll write down—instead of just time in the Word, I write down “I'm going to read through Isaiah this month.” Then, see small changes that add up. Just like revisiting our family values, it's a list that has to be revisited because new peace thieves sneak in, and I need to constantly reevaluate my heart and make those small changes month-to-month.

**Bob:** You mention that technology can be a peace thief. Technology can be more than that. In fact, it's one of the things that you talk about in the book. Technology is not necessarily a good investment of your pennies each week; is it?

**Eryn:** No, certainly. I'm not anti-technology, for sure; but when I was writing the book, I began to do some research into how much time, on average, a child spends with a screen between birth and 18. What I found was astonishing. In those 936 weeks, the average child spends 205 waking weeks with technology or with a screen. That's 22-percent of their childhood. So, when I had that number, I knew that we could not leave our family to default because the average child, it's six hours a day that they are with a device.

And it's not just about taking things away. It's not a negative. I want to make it a positive. So, when you don't have a device in your hands, what can I replace it with? Can I replace it with a good book? With a hiking stick? With a stirring spoon? What can I replace technology time with that creates those highlight moments for my children?

**Bob:** So, in your house, your seven-year-old is probably the most screen adept of your children; right?

**Eryn:** Yes.

**Bob:** So, your seven-year-old son would he default to the screen on his own if he didn't have anything else to go? Is that what he's drawn toward?

**Eryn:** You know I think every child has that draw to that entertainment factor, but it's been so interesting. We really decided to be more intentional around screen time when he was about four-years-old. It was a struggle at first; but at this point, now, he would actually default to playing outside or to reading a book.

When I do allow them TV—of course, we allow them some TV—when I do allow it, when I ask him to turn it off, there's no argument. He just slips it off. Now, the three-year-olds—that would be a different story; and there are still some tantrums, but we have stuck with this long enough that he just knows that—“No, it's a treat. It's not something to feast on.”

**Bob:** So, what are the rules at the Lylum house when it comes to screens?

**Eryn:** Mom and Dad control it.

**Bob:** Okay.

**Eryn:** We say when it goes on / when it goes off; and for the most part, we always pick the programs, or they have to programs that we know.

**Bob:** Are you talking about TV? Are you talking about an iPad? Are you talking about a computer? What are you talking about? All of those things?

**Eryn:** No, they only have experience with a TV.

**Bob:** Okay.

**Eryn:** They've used an iPad at the library, but that's all. They are not allowed to use our phones or anything like that. It's just something that we knew we wanted to start off young.

**Bob:** So, your seven-year-old—if you are on a trip up into the mountains, he doesn't have an iPad that he can play with?

**Eryn:** No, no, we want them to see the mountains. There have been times, of course, when we'll flip on a DVD in the car; but for the most part, we don't. In fact, we did a road trip from Colorado up to the upper peninsula of Michigan where my husband's family lives.

**Bob:** So long way?

**Eryn:** Yes, and on that trip was also a trip to Minnesota and Wisconsin and all the way back, and we got home and we realized they haven't used the DVD player at all. It was such a sweet thing. We just give them a pile of books, and kids have that natural curiosity that if you give them a book—and it may take some retraining—but they are entertained with that.

**Dennis:** If Barbara were here, she would be nodding her head, I promise you. She believed in getting the kids in good books; and if you did play a media device, it was back to the *Chronicles of Narnia* which was a book on tape.

**Eryn:** Yes. Oh, yes.

**Dennis:** Not just entertainment, but entertainment that was telling a story that enlarged their mind and their hearts.

**Bob:** I just believed in whatever made the car quiet. [Laughter] That was kind of my—I think a lot of parents are just like—“I just want whatever works that will give me”—we’re back to peace—“I want some peace in the car on the way here.” But you’re saying, “If the way you’re buying peace for your child is two hours of driving where they are playing a game on an iPad, there is something wrong with that?”

**Eryn:** I think the time could be used in a better manner.

**Dennis:** So, I know this is just theoretical at this point because your oldest is approaching the eighth year of his life. When do you think you will allow your child to have a device?

**Eryn:** That is a good question. Honestly, we want to hold it off as long as we can; and for some parents—myself included—there are those thoughts of—“Well, it’s a tech-savvy world. We’re going to deprive them. They have to learn these things”; but the truth is they are going to learn them at some point. I’m really not afraid of depriving them of this knowledge. I want them to learn how to be stewards of their time and relationships first before I teach them about how to use technology.

**Bob:** I haven’t asked you this yet, but you’ve got to be homeschooling your kids; right?

**Eryn:** We are; correct.

**Bob:** Because if your kids are going to kindergarten or first grade, that makes the whole tech-management a big—it’s a hard deal at that point; isn’t it?

**Eryn:** But what you can control is in your home. So, if they are going to school and they are having this access to media, well then, you can make some new rules at home that are going to lessen that time at home and build those relationships at home; and that’s the place of foundation.

**Bob:** I’m also thinking that your kids are watching you—

**Eryn:** Oh, yes.

**Bob:** So, this means that you’ve got to be disciplined about your screen time; doesn’t it?

**Dennis:** She already confessed she had a problem with email and—

**Eryn:** Uh-huh.

**Dennis:** —and checking her phone too often.

**Eryn:** Oh, I do. Oh, I do. This has been the biggest struggle for me. I talk about it in the book because it was such a struggle for me. I have to ask myself—“What is in my

hands”—because I want my children to be intentional about what is in their hands. So, if I want them to spend their time holding the hand of their daddy or holding a good book or holding a pen and paper, then, those are the things that I need to be doing. I need to be holding my husband’s hand before I’m holding my phone; and it is a struggle. This is something that has been one of those things I have to constantly revisit and reevaluate.

**Bob:** So, you know there are some moms who about five minutes ago just said, “Okay, I just tuned out of this whole thing because this camping and hiking in the mountains and no screen time; and it’s like—‘No, that’s just not who we are as a family.’” You’ve met moms who have different priorities. As you interact with those moms, you would just say to them, “Okay, just how is it working for you? Is it reinforcing the values that you want for your family; and if not, maybe, rethink some of these things?”

**Eryn:** You do not have to move to the mountains to be intentional as a family. That’s just what we chose to do; but you can make those subtle changes in your home that mean everything.

You can start reading to your kids every day—whether it’s five minutes / whether it’s ten minutes. Those times matter.

You can start changing the words you use in your home, and you can start parenting from that place of peace instead of that place of angst. It’s not all about—you need to uproot everything and start over. It really comes down to those small minor changes that are driven by those big values.

**Bob:** I just want to make sure we got the picture right. Your kids are not sitting on the sofa with books and folding their hands and just going—“Oh, we—is there another book we could read, Mommy? We loved the last one. Could you”—I mean your kids come to you and say, “I’m bored”; right?

**Eryn:** Oh, yes, of course, they do.

**Bob:** What do you do? Say, “Go read a book?”

**Eryn:** I point out the pile of books. One thing we like to do, of course, is library trips so that they have new material.

**Bob:** Right.

**Eryn:** But the sweet thing is they are getting to that age where we can read out loud to them and where they’ll start listening—the three-year-old, not so much. So, he is on my shoulders and jumping on the sofa; but he’s still—he’s being modeled to with me reading to him and him seeing how his big brothers are interacting. They, at this point, will sit next to me, and they would read all day long. They would let me read to them all day long. It just takes that training and patience as a toddler is jumping everywhere.

**Dennis:** I can just tell you from last night's experience with our three-year-old and four-year-old grandsons—

**Bob:** Are you babysitting right now?

**Dennis:** We are. We are babysitting. Is my martyr meter going off? I read *Goodnight Moon*—

**Eryn:** Good one.

**Dennis:** —with a powerful performance. It was not just *Goodnight Moon*. It was finding the mouse—

**Bob:** Yes.

**Dennis:** —in the house and the little old lady who is whispering, “Hush.”

**Bob:** Sounds almost Shakespearean the way you're doing it.

**Dennis:** It was.

**Eryn:** I can taste the mush. [Laughter]

**Dennis:** It was. It was fantastic.

I want our listeners to know what Eryn has really challenged us to do here—Proverbs 12, verse 20: “But those who plan peace have joy.” You are the parent. Your child needs a parent—not a buddy, not a friend. It doesn't mean you can't have a friendship relationship with them; but you, first and foremost, have got to set a course. So, what's your application out of everything Eryn has shared today? What are you going to apply to your family that will make a difference so that you will have a plan for peace in your family?

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