

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
Audio Media Services
Fearless – Ep 106 – Back to School
Final Transcript

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:00:00 School is back in full swing, and my daughter Margaret, she continues to love every single day, loves school, loves the books, loves the reading. My son wanted to know if he could skip the first day of school. But this school year you might be like me as a parent wondering how can we continue to stay active and involved and what questions do we need to be asking for our kids' education? So on this episode of *Fearless*, we're going to address those questions, those concerns of how we can stay active.

MUSIC STARTS

Cissie:

00:00:29 Hi, I'm Cissie Graham Lynch. Welcome to *Fearless*, helping you have a fearless faith in a compromising culture.

MUSIC TRANSITION

Cissie:

00:00:49 Welcome back to another episode of *Fearless*. And it's hard to believe that we're already middle, towards the end of September. And, you know, summer quickly came and quickly went, and I'm still thinking about summer, so I haven't fully adjusted. But this year I was just really struggling with my kids going back to school. I love having my kids home. I love spending time with them. I love the summer schedules of late nights and staying up late, playing games, watching movies ... but now my kids went back to school way earlier than some people. But now, all of our children are back in school. And we as parents, we're back in that daily grind of schedules and sports and homework. I'm very against homework—maybe I should do a podcast about anti-homework one day—but now that we're back in the grind and we're—our kids are back in school, I want to encourage parents to remember to stay active in your kids' lives, be vigilant, and when it comes to their schools and their sports.

The week my kids went back to school, somebody sent me this article that the number of nonbinary students, that's those who do not feel their gender identity can be defined between the two genders, that that number of students in New Jersey is up 4000% since 2019. Four thousand percent since 2019. That's such a short time. And we're living in this evil like social experiment, and I feel like our children are the lab rats during this experiment, and they've been lied to. And that none of these evil politicians, none of these educators that are pushing their own agenda will be there in these children's lives to pick up those broken pieces. And so we *know* that we live in a world where there's just mass confusion. And nothing seems to kind of surprise us anymore when we turn on the news or turn on our social media or news story. But this article, for some reason, hit my heart a little bit different and a little bit harder to think that number is just rapidly growing in this time, that children don't even want to identify with one gender or the other.

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But Satan has always been working and the needs of our children have been the same for decades, except that it seems to be more intense at this cultural moment. But we need to be intentional and we need to have daily focus on training our children in God's truth. According to Deuteronomy 6, as I've mentioned here many times, we as parents we have the primary responsibility for the spiritual formation of our children. They are to be our first field of harvest. And I know that, as most parents, we can be overextended at the end of the day. Whether you're a mom that's, you know, been at home all day with children, or you're a working parent that's coming home after 5 and you're trying to balance homework and getting your kids to sports and games or to practices. And by the time we've cleaned up the kitchen, and put the dishes away, read our kids a bedtime story, we're exhausted. And it's like, when do we have more time to do more homework, more studying, and our kids and what's going on in their education? But, this is something in my own life I've realized that we *must* make the time—we have the time, we might have to reevaluate our time, but we have the time. And that time has to be a priority in our lives, no matter how exhausted at the end of the day we are, because the cultural messaging, you know, from the time you turn on the news to our entertainment, to the social media—our children are getting more and more of a younger age—the education, the commercials, even our government, it all undermines God's wisdom. It all undermines His authority and His Word.

And we as parents, and even grandparents—I'm always trying to encourage grandparents because yes, now in most homes, both parents—we're seeing more and more—have a job and they *are* overextended. And I think it's so important that grandparents play a crucial role in the upbringing of our children. But we have to analyze and be prepared to show our children where those bad ideas, where they counter God's Word and help our children understand the truth as they get older. And for them to be able to spot those counterfeits with critical thinking, with Scripture because so often, even myself, you can hear somebody portray an idea, you are like, Oh, that kind of sounds right. It kind of sounds good. Maybe deep in your heart, you're like, Hmm, but it doesn't sound quite right. So to teach our children, you know, that critical thinking and to always be looking at Scripture.

And during this cultural time, parents, we are navigating some uncharted waters. But I want to encourage you that we have the Book which contains the charts and the compass for living. And we can't ignore God's Word. God's Word will direct us on every course of each day when we're thrown something new or out of left field; it's going to direct our course, but we have to be reading it, we *have* to be studying it. I just was told by a co-worker that a new study came out that a lot of Christians aren't even reading their Bible but once a week. And if that's the case, then we won't stay on course. And it's going to be overwhelming and we're going to fail it with our children.

But at this point in time, you know, we all have friends whose children have grown up in a Christian home—like we probably see this more and more. It's happening—who grew up in a Christian home, but have had their faith like greatly impaired or completely

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destroyed by either our academic institutions or sadly now even some bad churches—we've talked about that here on *Fearless* before, churches who are no longer teaching God's truth—and that people have just had their faith *completely* destroyed. So what happened? How did we get here? And in Matthew 13:25 it says, "*But while ... men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and [he went his way].*" And churches and Christians and parents, we've been sleeping. While our institutions were once strong in their Christian faith—like our academic institutions that we've heard of over and over have fallen, you know, away from God's Word. And those have been infiltrated in this nation, and of course we see what's happening and it's changing quickly.

So when it comes to our kids' school year, what can we as parents do? And look, as a parent, I'm at the beginning of, I think, these hard stages. You know, my little girl, she's about to turn 10 and I have a 7-year-old, and a little baby—that I've always thought the 5 and under were the easy stages in life when a lot of people would complain like these were the hard stages. I knew that these were the early ones 'cause I'm getting ready with a 10-year-old to start answering some tough questions and these tough questions about life and especially what's being pushed her way in today's culture. But what can we as parents do as our school year has started, as sports and extracurricular activities start, what can we do?

First, I think we as parents need to know our kids' *exact* courses in school. What are they being taught? And that's in public school *and* in private school. My kids, for now in this time of life, they go to a private school. But I do believe some private schools have dropped the ball at times and have allowed material that shouldn't be in there. In English classes, we need to know *every book* that's on the reading list—even in kindergarten, you know, so not just in like middle school or high school, but even in kindergarten. I remember my little girl coming home with a book from the library and it was *Olivia The Pig*, and that's a very well-known children's book series. But the very first page of the book was, I am depressed. Like, what? I am depressed. My little girl doesn't even know what that word is. And as we're seeing a rise in depression and medication that's being given out for children fighting with depression, I'm like, how do kids even know what that word is? And so in our household—and I know this is a real subject. I'm talking about my own life while pregnant, but for a kindergartner? I don't think so. She didn't even know. So Corey and I, we just had a big problem 'cause I'd *refuse* to teach that to my children. Those are things they're going to figure out on their own at a young age, but I'm not going to speak that [kind]—*and* Olivia the Pig was depressed because she couldn't be what she wanted to be, and then as soon as she started dressing up as a different character. So I felt like it kind of had some underlining messages in it. Not that a kindergartner would pick up, but even just that, teaching a kid that they're depressed? Not having it in my home.

And then last year she came home with an anime book. And even Margaret, she kind of came to me that she didn't feel comfortable with a lot of the images that she thought

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weren't appropriate. And so I was so thankful for her. And those are just some books I had to turn in. But I read an article, I Googled it—and of course every article that you pick up to find on this will be kind of mocking Christian parents or conservative parents, kind of making them look like just silly, ignorant, bigoted parents. So of course we know that's coming, but this was "... 50 books Texas parents want banned from school libraries." And the opening line said, "Conservative parents have swarmed school board meetings in Texas and across the country in recent months to call for the removal of library books that deal with race, racism, sex, gender and sexuality. Some parents have taken it a step further, filling out paperwork to formally challenge [these books] and forcing [the] administrators to review them." And I do think that's a little bit of a different conversation being in a school library where it's not mandatory. We gotta be careful what's mandatory and what's allowed our kids to read. But you just need to be aware of those books. So I encourage you, things I never even heard of, things that have beautiful covers that would definitely intrigue our students that are about transgenders and transitioning to gay to race and oppressions. So those kind of conversations, be careful. And of course, you know, it's always going to make us look bad. That's the world, but we're prepared and we know that.

But let's talk about our teachers. Who's doing the teaching and we need to be asking our kids daily what are they learning? I'd encourage you to get to know your teachers. Where are they from? You know, maybe, if you're at a Christian school, where do they even go to church, that can reveal a lot about somebody. Get to know them. But we don't always have the time to do that. I understand. But ask your children, is there anything unusual, if they're pushing any cultural issues, lessons maybe on the words of like "privilege" and "oppression." Those could be like key words to look out for, pronoun lessons or discussions, discussing anything that might be just confusing your kids. Just when you Google—start Googling like "gender identity" and stuff, the confusion is mass. And we know that God's not a God of confusion. And I just know adults, we can't keep up with the new terms. Like I Googled something—I can't even remember off the top of my head. I never even *heard* of that term before and I'm confused. I can't imagine what it's doing to our poor kids.

But if you think about it, if our kids go to school from, you know, 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. It's over 30 hours, 30–40 hours a week, they're spending it with the teacher. If they then go to play a sport or to go do another activity, that's another two hours away a day. And it's taking more and more time away that we spend as parents. So that little time that we have, whether it's in the car ride to school or around our kitchen table, we have to be so intentional with that time. Corey and I have been having conversations like this. I've mentioned it last year, but we're *really*—this year at the beginning of the school year, something I've done is try not to be on my phone from 5:00 p.m. till bedtime for my kids because they're asking. It's actually a really sweet time. It's kind of when they come to life, when they're going to bed, and I don't want to be busy on my phone, texting or checking work emails. I kind of check out from that and be very present with my children. Scripture says our children are olive shoots around our table. We have such a

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short time with our children around our table, to have those conversations with them. And then in the morning, I *love* our car rides in the morning. We play—I only allow praise and worship songs, ones that maybe my kids ask for. And then I find like a podcast. It's like five or 10 minutes for my kids to listen to. A friend of mine just came out with a new one, *God on the Go*, and it's about five minutes, and it was precious. My kids loved it on the way to school.

But as we're talking about the teachers, I want to be very careful. I know there's wonderful and godly teachers out there who do feel like it is a calling on their life to teach the next generation, and sadly they're being caught in the middle of so much just bad curriculum that's being pushed, so many agendas that are being pushed from up above them and from our culture and they are exhausted; they are tired. And I would just encourage parents, just really speak truth. Encourage those teachers out there; be thankful for them. I know so many that don't even want to teach anymore because they don't even have time to teach math, science, and reading, and English, much less teach some of this stuff that they're being pushed by some school districts, like LGBT history month, like for a whole month; they have to teach these other agendas. Those are tough. So be praying for those teachers that they can stand strong and hold the line, that God would give them grace and truth to meet with these students because our teachers are dealing with stuff that they've never had to deal with before. So I encourage you to encourage the teachers around you.

But we continue to read headlines more and more of stories. For instance, like the California's Department of Education, in a letter, pressured a school district to withdraw a proposal that requires school officials to notify parents if their children identifies as another gender. They want to keep this a secret. They don't want parents involved. And sadly it just takes one bad influence in a child's life, one person to speak into them that can ruin their whole life. And we as parents, we can't be careful enough. They do have to go out and live in this world and we have to teach them how to navigate through this world and through this culture. We can't protect them from that, from ever. But when they're 18 and under and they're living under our roof, that is our responsibility and we have to be active in protecting them.

And then let's talk about biology class. Honestly, I can't even believe kids are required to have biology class anymore 'cause it seems like culture's just thrown biology out the window. I don't even know if biology courses still exist because, you know, they're teaching kids that like when it comes to biology, they can kind of pick and choose and be fluid. But anyways, when it does come to these classes, review the texts and the assignments and what are they emphasizing?

Be prepared to discuss creation with your kids. I'm already starting that at a young age with my kids. What is creation? And kind of in a way that they would understand that a lot of people don't *believe* in creation. So just kind of starting those small conversations at a young age, because I *know* when they get into middle school, it's going to be a lot

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more, but encourage like God's intelligent design, you know, versus what the world would teach 'em, which was unplanned, random change over millions of years. So just be ready.

And then when it comes to like sex education, go in, figure out what they're teaching in that course. For me—and this is over 20 years ago—my mom did that and I was just like horrified. Like she went into the school, wanted to know what the curriculum was, and I was so embarrassed by it. But you know what? I want to tell parents, it's OK if our kids get embarrassed when we're challenging these ideas and that we're fighting for them. They might get embarrassed now, but later they're going to be thankful that you did it, or maybe like me and just laugh. But I look back now, even before all this crazy stuff being taught, my mom wanted to know what they were going to teach and I'm thankful for that. But when it comes to history and sociology, review the text again. Are there things like critical theory being taught? Are those words of "oppression" and "victimhood"? Those are just some things we need to be looking for.

But just as you need to know your child's teacher, make sure you know their coaches, dance teachers, tutors, youth pastors, piano teachers, whoever's an influence in their life, the same way we need to know their teachers. The influence of those who oversee our kids' interests, hobbies, and talents can sometimes even have a bigger impact than their teachers because our kids want to so badly to please those who they might seem to hold that key to their biggest dreams and aspirations. So make sure—but yes, I even said our youth pastors. We just can't safely assume that they have the sound doctrine of truth and to be able to prepare and to teach our children, especially during the times we're living. I'm sure these youth pastors are getting some crazy questions, that probably never imagined, and we need to know where they stand on some of these issues.

But when it comes to our sports teams, we need to know, especially when it comes to our daughters, and this may seem so extreme, but sadly it's our reality in today's time. You need to find coaches and know what their policies are for boys who identify as the opposite sex. And if they want to join your little girls team and you think it might not happen to you, but that's probably what every parent said, and we can't get blindsided by this. And we as parents, we're going to have to make some tough decisions when it comes to our kids. We might have to draw that line. We might have to pull our daughter from a team and that's going to hurt some of her goals and hurt some of her dreams if we have to pull them from a team. And I know that's tough. I pray if I'm faced with that situation, that God would give me the strength and the grace to deal with it and to be able to talk to my children in that moment, if I do have to pull my daughter from a team, that they would understand that it could be a decision as a family we would make. And although we have seen parents begin to become outraged and they're beginning to push back in many of these areas, I've also learned, and kind of watch from afar, that maybe the majority of parents, especially the majority of Christian ones, would probably rather not say something. They want to just keep it smooth for their children. They don't

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want to put a bump in the road for their children, mess up maybe their sports aspirations—and I've seen it. They would just rather not push back. But I just want to encourage you: Stand strong; pray that God would give you the wisdom in those moments.

'Cause parents, we need to make sure that schools are educating on the things that are necessary, those helpful subjects, the skills that our children will need for life and not taking the time to be indoctrinating them with like the latest progressive trend. And I can remember going to a school board meeting one time, and I just mentioned this when a school was trying to push a whole LGBT history month. And my question was, What are they going to be teaching for a whole month from K-12? What are you teaching kindergartners and first graders and second grade for a whole month on this? But a parent, a teacher came up, a teacher who's frustrated, a teacher that barely has enough time in her class, she says, I have barely have enough time to teach English and math and science to kids—especially kids that are struggling in her class with academics—much less spend it on all of this other, you know, mandatory LGBT history month agenda. So, for those teachers, that takes a lot of focus and energy. And so we just have to realize our kids are there for a long time. They're spending a lot of hours. These people have critical influence in our children's lives. And we as parents *need* to be prepared. It's our job as parents to disciple our children. It's not the state's, even though we're seeing the state thinks it is, it's our job, and we need to take charge; we need to guard their hearts. One of my daily prayers for my daughter is, Lord, protect her innocence as long as possible in this world that is just trying to teach her all kinds of nonsense.

And parents, I really do believe we need to prepare our children not to be liked. I have personally have already started kind of having these conversations with my children. I tell them on a simple level that they might understand kind of at their age that Scripture teaches us that we're not going to be popular when we take a stand for truth. And, you know, showing them what did the world do to Jesus and what did they accuse Him of, that if they accused Him and treated Him like that, how are we going to be treated? They need to be prepared—and some people might think that seems like extreme and tough, but we can do it in a simple and loving way and a way that reassures our children of the truth of God's love. But we *do* need to prepare them that as Christians, we are going to suffer, we are going to be rejected, we're going to be criticized, especially in the world that we're in because Christians in history *have* suffered because of their commitment to Christ. However, in our country, we have had favor for hundreds of years, and to some of us that appears to be coming to an end. But we need to encourage our kids: Christ is worth all of it, and His grace is sufficient.

And finally, encourage your kids and teach them to have courage. Yes, we have to teach them. They're going to see it from us. They're going to learn it from us. And like I said earlier, there might be times we embarrass them when it comes to it. I *know* my mom sure did embarrass me many times, but she did it for my own good, especially in

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those teenage years, I fought back, but I know now that she was doing it because she loved me. And those are going to be some tough decisions for parents and for families. And my prayer is that you would be in God's Word, that you'd be studying it, that it would be directing you and your family, so whenever a situation comes, that God and the Holy Spirit would give you a peace to raise your children and give you direction of how to raise them in a godly and honoring way in the culture that we're facing. But they're going to have to have courage to do it. And it's as my grandfather said, the courage of one stiffens the spines of others. You'd be surprised as a parent, and as a Christian parent, other parents will be watching you. So if you take a stand, if you have courage, that is going to just stiffen the spines of those around you.

So once again, parents, we're kind of at the beginning of the school year and we're already wondering if the school year's over. It's just like on the first day with my son; he woke up and said, Can we skip the first day of school? I wish I could skip the whole year, but unfortunately we can't. And we don't know what this whole school year is going to hold for our families and our children. There's going to be some good ones and some bad memories, but we as parents, we have to stay active in their school life. We have to stay active in their sports and all the other activities—we can't afford not to, not in the times that we're in. This time is precious. Time is fleeting. We all know that. So just stay active. Be prayerful for your kids this year.

MUSIC TRANSITION

Cissie:

00:23:41 Thanks for joining me on another episode of *Fearless*. I know these can be tough conversations for parents to have and sadly that's the reality we're in. But if you want an additional resource, I have a family devotional called *Fearless Family* that would be great for you for the beginning of this school year. You can find it at CissieGrahamLynch.com.

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