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[Kianna:] I'm Kianna Skal.

I'm a counselor at Cornerstone, and I've also been a children's ministry director for the last eight years at a church, working with families and kids and teens and all sorts of individuals.

And I've heard time and time again, people just like you, families like you, coming in—or kids like maybe your kids—coming in to church just on a random Sunday and sharing what is going on.

For that day, little things like, "Someone's not paying attention to me at home," or big things where they walk in right after a big fight just happened, and I see the kids coming in heavy. Or I've had parents come up to me saying they don't know what to do. Their kid doesn't want to go to church anymore. There's kids super anxious, and they're not sure what exactly they're supposed to do as a parent.

And so I really empathize with all the stories in the room that you may have experienced that I don't know about. And I just honor them today. And thank you for what you're doing as parents and for coming in to learn more.

When your family has structure and it has leadership, you're saying to your children and to those who are watching you: "This is the way. Walk in it. This is how we're going to set the pace for how to live. This is how we are going to be examples to one another in kindness and goodness and deed and all of the different things. This is the way. Let's walk in it."

And that—have you ever had a boss? Oh, I have Tammy, and she is a great example. She is. She really is. A boss that comes alongside and says: "Come on, this is what we're going to do. Follow me." How reassuring that is to you. How non-anxiety-inducing that is for somebody to do that. And if that is the truth about bosses at work, how much more in your family system will that be true?

Structure provides boundaries between family roles. There's security in knowing that you are someone's husband or you are someone's wife and mothers and fathers. There is a beautiful thing that happens when you're able to work as a team and know we're the leaders and we're working together as the parents to lead this family.

And then there is a peace and a rest whenever there's a boundary in letting a child remain the child—and not asking them to be the leaders, but instead acknowledging where they are and letting them have that boundary of they're the child and they can follow and learn and grow.

Structure provides rules, and rules offer freedom. "What can I do? What can't I do as well?" But it offers freedom to us. What am I able to do? And whenever we know what we're able to do, it starts to help to build autonomy, especially in kids.

They know what they're able to do. They can learn how to self-govern. They'll learn character. They'll learn integrity. Setting rules is not just—I'm a big rules person. I love rules. So setting rules is not a big, like "Debbie Downer" kind of situation. Setting rules is to set them up so that they can walk in freedom and walk in the ability to make decisions on their own.

And it also creates a culture. The rules that you set for your family—it creates a culture of who we are. This is something that we allow, and this is something we don't allow. And that provides ownership for the kids to know that they're a part of something.

Having nurture provides care—emotional, physical, and spiritual care. And care communicates value and importance to someone. Nurture also provides provision, and provision is preparing in advance. And service, which again communicates value to somebody that you are providing for.

And whether it's having band-aids ready or packing a lunch or making dinner or doing the laundry or working day in and day out—you're working ahead. You know, as parents, you're always thinking ahead and you're thinking, "They don't know why I'm doing this, but I'm thinking five steps ahead because I'm trying to provide for them because I love them."

And with nurture, it offers relationship. And relationship is when you are known by somebody. And to know and to be known by somebody is what everybody is looking for—even the kids. Even the kids, that is what they want.

When I train my teachers at church, I usually say, "If you play with them, they'll play longer because they want to connect with you. So if you start to play with them, they'll start to play it longer. Otherwise, they're just going to dump all of them on the floor and then walk away and leave a nice big mess. But when you play with them, they play longer because they are searching to be known by you and to know you." And it's special to get to know somebody.

And finally, nurture provides identity, and that's forming their core beliefs about themselves. And for parents, I can't think of a greater thing than you pouring into them using all of these strengths to form who they are so that whenever they are faced with things out in the world, they are not shaken. They're not doubting. They know who they are because it's been formed in them.

If we have the opportunity to walk in leadership, we also have the opportunity to react into situations of crisis and scenarios—and we all do it. And this is not saying, "This is the way, walk in it." This is saying, "Where are we going? I don't know. Does anybody know?" And it causes panic, and it would cause panic in everyone.

If there's an opportunity for boundaries, there's also opportunities for disorder. And you know, I looked up the antonym—the opposite—of boundaries, and it's actually the middle. And whenever you don't have boundaries in place in your family, you're going to bring people—the children—into the middle of your relationships, into the middle of your parenting, into the middle of your conflict for the day.

We call that triangulation. And what it really is, is there is something—an anxiety—between two people, and to dissolve it, you bring a third person into it to try to lessen the anxiety levels.

That's why boundaries are important. But we do it. It's very difficult. This is very, very common. But it's something to look for.

If we have rules, we can also have indecisiveness. "What can I do? What can't I do?" And this does not strengthen autonomy and character and integrity. Instead, it goes, "Well, it was fine this time, but it's not going to be fine the next time."

And finally, if we provide protection, we can also provide danger. We can be fearful of putting our children in situations, but we can also sometimes miss it and unintentionally—by our desire to maintain relationship first—maybe put them in harm's way because we didn't decide to set up a rule but instead valued keeping them happy with us.

So if we have opportunity for—well, we can say it on the flip side. If there's opportunity for it to be a challenge, there's also opportunity for it to be a strength to you. And like I said before—oh, did I not do nurture? I'll give you that one too.

If there's an opportunity for care, there's an opportunity for dismissiveness because we're tired and it's hard to put someone else's needs above your own again and again and again.

Additionally, if there is opportunity for vision, there's opportunity for lack. And there are times whenever you just don't have it. And this is not to say "you're doing something wrong." It's to say, "It's hard. We're humans. You're a human." Before you're a parent, you have your own life and your own story, and it's hard to provide over and over again.

If there's opportunity for relationship, there's opportunity for isolation where the child does not feel known. They do not feel like you're getting it. And if they voice it and you dismiss them, then they really don't. And they'll start to keep it to themselves—as humans would do.

And then finally, identity. If there is a pouring in of identity, it creates this knowing of who they are. If there's not, then it's confusion. "Who am I? Where do I belong?" And what happens whenever something comes up against me—maybe it threatens my identity and I go a different way?

So we need both structure and nurture.