

When "No" Meant More Than No (The TINS Framework™): A Phenomenological

Revisit

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Featured Phenomenological Lens

Meaning (Martin Heidegger)

Meaning refers to the significance people experience within events rather than the events themselves. Martin Heidegger emphasized that human beings do not encounter the world as detached observers of neutral facts. Rather, people always encounter situations as already meaningful within the context of their relationships, concerns, responsibilities, and everyday lives. In this revisit, we explore how a simple parental instruction came to carry meanings that extended far beyond the words that were spoken.

Reflective Question

How can the same words carry different meanings for different people?

This question invites us to look beyond the words themselves and consider how meaning emerges through lived experience before any response is given.

Part of the author's ongoing doctoral research on phenomenology and human experience at the Institute for Christian Studies (Toronto).

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Category: Parenting

As described in the original post titled "When 'No' Meant More Than No," a parent and child found themselves in conflict over what initially appeared to be a simple instruction.

The parent spoke.

The child reacted.

The conversation became tense.

A parent gave a direction.

A child resisted.

Yet something more was occurring beneath the surface.

The words were shared.

The meaning was not.

Why?

Why TINS Framework™ Theoretical Perspectives Matter:

A Deeper Phenomenological Lens

Phenomenology provides a deeper lens through which we can understand why the theoretical perspectives of the TINS Framework™ matter in everyday human experience.

Human beings do not merely experience words.

Human beings experience meanings.

A word does not enter an empty space.

It enters histories.

Relationships.

Memories.

Expectations.

Emotions.

Concerns.

The same word may therefore disclose different meanings to different people.

What interests me is that parents often assume conflict begins when disagreement becomes visible.

Yet conflict frequently begins much earlier.

Conflict often begins in meaning.

Before people respond, they perceive.

Before people react, they interpret.

Before people speak, they experience words through their own horizon of meaning.

Long before disagreement becomes visible, meaning is already forming.

Differences often begin in perspective.

Before people respond, they perceive.

Before people evaluate, they interpret.

Reflection allows people to examine the meanings they carry before those meanings become assumptions about others.

Reflection slows the movement from interpretation to reaction.

Reflection creates space for understanding.

What fascinates me is that meaning is rarely fixed.

Meaning can change even when the event itself remains unchanged.

The words remain the same.

The meaning changes.

The next time you find yourself in conflict with someone important to you, it may be worth asking a different question.

Not simply:

"What was said?"

But:

"What did those words come to mean to me?"

And perhaps even:

"Could they mean something else?"

Notes

1. The TINS Framework™ integrates six established theoretical perspectives. References such as “TINS Social Constructivism” or “TINS Procedural Justice” indicate the application of these theories within the TINS Framework™ and do not imply ownership of the original theories.
2. Readers interested in the biblical integration of the six theoretical perspectives within the TINS Framework™ may wish to consult my book *Biblical Mediation in Marriage and Family Conflict Resolution* (Revised Edition, 2025), published under my full name, Joshua Chee-Ning Lam.
3. Readers interested in exploring the six theoretical perspectives of the TINS Framework™ in everyday life may wish to consult the *Why You Matter* five-book mini-series. The series applies the six perspectives to a wide range of real-life situations involving *personal life, work, marriage, family, and community*. Written from *both biblical and humanistic perspectives*, the series allows readers to begin with either perspective or move between the two to gain a broader understanding of human experience, relationships, conflict, and decision-making. The series is published under the name Joshua C. Lam.