FamilyLife Today® Radio Transcript

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Parenting, Rainey Style

Guest:	Ashley Escue, Ben Rainey, Rebecca Mutz, Deborah Petrik, Laura Dries
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Bob: From time to time on *FamilyLIfe Today* you've heard some real-life illustrations about marriage and family from Dennis and Barbara Rainey as they've raised their children. Like this time when they got their kids involved in the illustration.

Dennis: Rebecca really was in the midst of peer pressure. She was so surrounded that on more than one occasion, she would come to us in tears, and she would compare herself to what Rebecca?

[Laughter]

Rebecca: It's so cheesy now.

Dennis: It is cheesy but—

Rebecca: but it fit perfectly.

Dennis: It did, and it was so real at the time.

Bob: This is *FamilyLife Today*. Our host is the President of FamilyLife®, Dennis Rainey, and I'm Bob Lepine. We'll hear some flashbacks today, and hear from some of Dennis and Barbara Rainey's children about what it was like growing up Rainey. Stay with us.

And welcome to *FamilyLife Today*. Thanks for joining us. So we've come through the celebration of our 25th anniversary of *FamilyLife Today*.

Dennis: And we've decided to rename the broadcast *Gunsmoke*.

Bob: [Laughter] *Gunsmoke*?

Dennis: That's right. There's getting ready to be a shootout at—

Bob: No. No. No. No. No.

Dennis: You're ambushing me here on the broadcast today.

Bob: No. Here's what it is. It's not *Gunsmoke*. It's *This is your Life*. That's what it's going to be. You remember that old show where they used to bring out folks and they—we have been through the archive and we've got some—

Dennis: Am I that ancient? [Laughter]

Bob: We've got some clips for you that we think are going to make—this week when it's the Thanksgiving celebration—this is a week when we ought to focus on family and things we're thankful for, so I'm going to play some things. You have no idea what's coming up, right?

Dennis: I don't.

Bob: I'm just going to play some of these clips, and this will take you back a bit.

In fact, the first clip we're going to listen to goes all the way back to—I think was this '93? I'm looking at our—

Dennis: 1993

Bob: I think that's right. This was 1993. Let's listen together and just see if you recognize this voice.

[Previous interview]

Ashley: I like what Dad does for us—all his kids. I don't remember when he started doing it. I guess it was when I was young because I remember going out with Dad. He takes us all on dates. He takes us on dates by ourselves. I just remember that even from when I was little. Dad would tell me about one time we went to see a Disney movie—or something like that, and we went and got chocolate afterwards—or ice cream or something. We're driving home, and I don't remember saying this, but he asked me what was my favorite part about the evening. I don't—Do you remember how old I was?

Dennis: I think you were three—three and a half years old.

Ashley: He asked me what my favorite part of the evening was. I just looked up at him and I said, "just being with you." At three and a half, that's really what I liked doing. Was just being with my dad and doing something with him.

That was the most special part of my evening. And still to this day, he still takes us out and we don't let him forget. We go "It's my turn. You owe me a date soon." He goes "Yes, you're right. We need to do that." It's so fun and I love it!

Dennis: Well that's the picture Bob. A parent pursuing a relationship with their child. Especially during the turbulence of the teenage years. I think sometimes we think the work is over. It's not done! There's a lot that can be done then and a lot of love that can be really, I think can be built into their hearts over some time maybe we missed with our kids.

[Studio]

Dennis: And that of course was our daughter, Ashley, who was commencing on her senior year in high school and—

Bob: How old is she today?

Dennis: She's 43. I wish Bob—I wish we had a live video cam in her kitchen right now.

Because I know what it would look like—unless she was having company to come over—with seven boys and a foster care infant in a swing probably swinging back and forth or being held by one of the boys. There's a lot of life in her family. I'm just really proud of her and Michael and how they have hammered out God's mission for their lives, their marriage, and their family. They're leaving a wonderful legacy as they have their oldest who is a senior in high school right now as well.

Bob: One of the things that you sought to do with this program through the years was to be authentic, transparent—to bring us into the interior of what goes on in your home, your marriage, your family. And at the same time allow a little privacy for your children, so that they didn't feel like they were growing up in the spotlight. And for the most part, I think they felt protected from that.

Dennis: I think they did, maybe until the end.

Our broadcast started, of course, in '92. Ashley left home to go away to college not long after that. But one of the advantages to living in a very small community like we do—and our kids went to public school—is that really no one at that school really cared if we had a broadcast or not.

Bob: Right.

Dennis: It was an opportunity to allow them to lead a normal life, and not feel like they were in a fishbowl with people looking in expecting us to have quote unquote the perfect family with perfect kids. It doesn't exist on this side of heaven. The perfect father, our heavenly Father, had two kids and they weren't perfect.

Bob: Right.

Dennis: So, we thoroughly enjoyed the process. I'm glad we've had a chance over the past 25 years, just to give people a glimpse at what a family that is attempting to follow Jesus Christ looks like. And how they fail and get up and fail again and get up, and teach through their failures to their kids.

Bob: Well we had a father and son join us one day on *FamilyLife Today*. Friends of yours for many years, Ron Jenson and his son, Matt. In the middle of that program, we decided to call your son, Benjamin.

[Previous interview]

Matt: Ben and myself, and my dad and Mr. Rainey, all way back—probably about ten years ago—went on a little fishing trip. [Laughter] I think Ben remembers this. We took the Rainey van and we listened to some tapes on preparing for adolescence and on sexuality itself.

Ron: Oh yes. I remember this one.

Ben: It was the sex tapes.

Ron: The sex tapes.

Dennis: It was dark in the car.

Ron: It was quiet. It was quiet.

Dennis: And it was quiet. Yes.

Ron: These boys were rolling their eyes going, "Here we go with our dads. [Laughter] This is the talk."

Bob: But you remember that, don't you?

Matt: But I tell you something. The thing about it—the thing about it was first of all, this is a subject that men do not want to talk about with their kids. This is something that our fathers did pro-actively / intentionally, because they didn't want to leave the subject uncovered.

The thing I will never forget is both of our dads turning to us at the end of the trip—I don't remember most of the rest of the trip, but they turned to us and they said "I have never cheated on your mother. I want you to know that." And the consistency that they showed in doing that. The integrity that they showed in doing that, and the fact that they actually talked about something.

Dennis: I think the important thing to note here is that neither Ron and I had the courage to do it by ourselves. [Laughter] You know seriously, I think sometimes people have listened to us here on the broadcast Bob, and they hear where I am today in the process. Which is now going through six kids through this process, and you gain courage, and you gain momentum, and you hear kind of the conclusion of convictions. But back then I remember Ron and I getting together as a couple of dads going, "Hey what are you talking to your son about?" And he goes "I haven't talked to him." "Well you think we ought to?" "Well man I don't want to." "Maybe we ought to anyway." We had this conversation and decided to go on this fishing trip together—get these tapes by—

Ron: Then we used tapes. [Laughter]

Dennis: Yes, we did. We used Dr. Dobson's tapes.

Ron: That's right.

Dennis: You better believe it. We plugged those things in.

It did get quiet in the car. We gave each other courage to enter into this discussion with our sons. As the process flows out, that's how those convictions are imparted to the next generation.

[Studio]

Bob: We didn't get to hear a lot of Ben during that clip, but you remember that trip like it was yesterday; don't you?

Dennis: I do. We went camping and it was awfully dark in that car. I think I turned the light down on the speedometer. It was like here were these grown men with their sons wanting them to hear the truth. But it's like "Man, I'm glad we can look up to the horizon where the lights are shining out on the roadway."

Bob: Of course, it's funny because a lot of parents have taken their kids on trips in cars, now, listening to you and Barbara—

Dennis: Of course.

Bob: ---do the same thing with the Passport to Purity® material. This is something that you have felt was critical for parents to take the initiative on.

Dennis: Yes. As many of our listeners know, Barbara and I taught a class for 11 years to over 550 eleven and twelve-year old's—Sunday School class—and in it we just talked to them straight about life. I think today more than ever, it's moms and dads who need to have the privilege—of talking about life's most intimate issues that really need

to happen within the context of a bumbling, stumbling family that's attempting to follow Christ. I mean, it's okay if you don't say it perfectly. I mean, Ron's son and mine, they don't remember what we said. They just knew that we attempted to do it and we did it. Then at the end we said, "Yes, we've been faithful to your mom all these years." I'm happy to say after 45 years, that's still true of me. I think we could call Ron Jenson and it'd be the same answer for him.

Bob: You will recognize this next clip because this was a classic moment on FamilyLife Today with your daughter Rebecca.

[Previous interview]

Dennis: Rebecca really was in the midst of peer pressure. She was so surrounded that on more than one occasion she would come to us in tears, and she would compare herself to what Rebecca.

Rebecca: [Laughter] It's so cheesy now.

Dennis: It is cheesy but it—

Rebecca: But it fit perfectly.

Dennis: It did, and it was so real at the time. She was—I mean, I felt her pain, Bob.

Rebecca: Whatever. [Laughter]

Bob: This would have been when you were 15 or 16?

Dennis: About 14-15.

Rebecca: 14-15

Dennis: And 16-17.

Rebecca: Yes. I compared myself to a caged bird. [bird sound]

Bob: A caged bird trapped / imprisoned.

Rebecca: And they had thrown the key away. Whatever. I have a funny story.

One of my friends growing up was—we were—I was at her house. I had spent the night. I was crying to her and telling her how awful it was. "I'm a caged bird, or I'm a caged animal or whatever" and she was like "Rebecca, you just need to tell your parents to just give you the key and just let you out. You just need to throw the key away." It was a dramatic thing, and it was so funny.

Barbara: It's so funny *now*.

Rebecca: It's funny now. At the time, I was so passionate about it. I was just like "Yes, I need to go to my parents," and you know.

Dennis: And so, we heard that speech, Bob.

Bob: The caged bird speech.

Dennis: Actually, it wasn't a speech. It was a dramatic monologue.

Rebecca: A dramatic monologue.

Dennis: And it was dramatic. I mean, bless Rebecca's heart. She would have these times she would come to, and we're laughing now but it was not—well truthfully, there were a couple of times that Rebecca was so dramatic in her tears and feeling like a caged bird, that both Barbara and I could not allow one another to get eye contact. Because if we would have looked—

Rebecca: It's sad.

Dennis: It—

Rebecca: I can't believe you guys. Thanks a lot.

Dennis: Well, you need to understand—

Rebecca: But sympathize.

Dennis: —after you heard that—that—that—

Bob: The caged bird monologue?

Dennis: Yes. It's like [teenage girl voice] "I just feel trapped. I'm just—all my friends are free." [bird sound]

[Studio]

Bob: We can thank our engineer, Keith, for the bird sound effects.

Dennis: No doubt about it. All these years we've told that story, I've never ratted on which of Rebecca's peers it was that gave her that advice.

Bob: You're going to do it today?

Dennis: I'm going to do it today. [Laughter] She's now a mom herself of a brood of children—Christy Paine Hutchens.

Bob: That's who it was?

Dennis: Yes.

Bob: But hearing Rebecca describe it again, you were still laughing to hear the story; right?

Dennis: Oh, yes. Well of course. The thing is Bob, every parent has those moments—

Bob: Right.

Dennis:—when they're acting just a fool. That's all there is to it.

They're just being a fool. Like a child and it is all you can do to keep from just bursting out laughing and doubling up.

Bob: Well, I've got a clip you haven't heard. This has not been aired on FamilyLife Today. In fact, this is something we just taped recently as a part of the Art of Parenting video series that we're putting together. That's going to be available in the spring. But we got your adult children together. We asked them to reflect on what it was like growing up in your home and get their perspective on your parenting from where they are today. In fact, Rebecca starts this clip off. It's pretty self-explanatory.

Dennis: Did the kids all know that they could be written out of the will? [Laughter]

Bob: Listen to this.

[Previous recording]

Rebecca: [Laughter] The favorite child? That would be Laura.

Bob: Who was the favorite child?

Ashley: It was Laura. Absolutely. Not was. It's Laura.

Bob: Still?

Ashley: Probably. [Laughter]

Rebecca: She's the baby. So, the baby is always the favorite.

Ashley: Well, I think it's because as parents we have our guinea pig which is the first child. That's what I am. Then you learn all of the things you need to know and, so you do better as you go down. But then you also get older, so you get more tired. I'm realizing this as a parent now. And you just kind of run out of steam. They get babied. They get special privileges. I've done a bunch of counseling over the years, and my husband and I have done some together. He says actually that Rebecca, the middle child, is the most well-adjusted because she got all of the learning that mom and dad got from raising the couple of first ones as they started. But they're a little bit more relaxed with her, but they're not totally relaxed like they are with Laura.

Rebecca: I think she probably knows it, but she probably wouldn't admit it. That she's the favorite.

Laura: Growing up? Me. I could go to my grave on this. I really don't think there was a favorite. I truly just think mom and dad were just tired when it got to me. I mean, it's just honest. They worked really hard on the first three to get it right and then they were just like "You know, we're exhausted."

[Studio]

[Laughter]

Bob: Well there you are.

Dennis: I'll tell you what. Folks need to get the Art of Parenting if for no other reason than to see the expressions on our kids' faces as they go through kind of their feelings of Laura being the favorite.

Bob: So, was she the favorite child?

Dennis: Well we were exhausted. [Laughter] And she stayed after all of them were gone. You know when you have six there—I mean, you got six chirping birds with their mouths all wide open. It moved from bird to bird over the years. So when you're the caboose, there's some privileges. But there's also some costs. I think we were stricter with Laura than the other kids because we had tested a few of our convictions out. It's kind of like when you get to the last child, you've kind of come to a conclusion about dating and peer pressure and certain matters where you're not going to be fooled like you were with number one, number two, or number three.

Bob: In our case the favorite child kind of changed from day to day depending on who was acting what way on any particular day, right?

Dennis: Yes. That's how I would answer the question. Again, when there's one child ends up being alone with her parents when there has been six competing, I understand why they all thought that.

Bob: Well FamilyLife Today had not been on the air for very long when you celebrated your 50th birthday. We had a big party here at the office to celebrate and your kids came from all over the country.

Dennis: And everybody dressed in black. They had black balloons. They put me in a wheelchair and rolled me into the staff meeting.

Bob: But there was one child who was not able to come, and we captured that moment.

[Previous recording]

Bob: You know we did pretty good. We got Ashley and Michael over here from Memphis. We got Samuel down here from Fayetteville in a windy, rainy drive down the pig trail last night arriving at our house at two in the morning.

But we couldn't arrange for a direct transcontinental flight from Thailand to get Benjamin here. The best we could do was to get him here by telephone, and he should be on the line with us. Benjamin are you there?

Benjamin: I'm here.

[cheering and clapping]

Bob: What time is it in Thailand?

Benjamin: It's 5:15.

Bob: 5:15. You're ready for dinner, huh?

Benjamin: Hardly. [Laughter]

Bob: Well, you know what today is, don't you?

Benjamin: Yes.

Bob: Yes.

Benjamin: I heard the rumor.

Bob: Yes. What have you been thinking about today as you've reflected on your dad's 50th?

Benjamin: Man, I've been—and I apologize for the start of the conversation—I've been crying for the past 5 minutes. Dad, I think I'm looking at the same picture you guys are. I guess it's still up. It's you and me at the cross.

Dennis: Yes.

Benjamin: As I reflected on that, there's one thing that stood out to me was that—Dad, no matter what we've done in the 22 years of my life, the cross has been central to everything. You've been a trail blazer by showing us the way. By showing us that the cross was everything to you, and it should be everything to us. Not many of you know this, but that's why I'm here. And this won't mean whole lot to everyone there, but when I left this summer, we just had a big going away at the airport. And you know I consider myself to be a pretty big guy / pretty strong. But you know even as big as I am and as tough as I appear to be that was a hard day to leave. I wrote about it in my journal.

I said "Yesterday was really an amazing day leaving Little Rock. Wow! I never really thought I'd be so scared. So not wanting to leave, but when I hugged dad it was as if the whole world could attack me and I'd be safe." Dad, that's how it's been my whole life. I mean nothing mattered at that point to me when I was hugging you. I just want to thank you for being my dad and for showing me the way.

[Studio]

Bob: You've heard that dozens of times. Still meaningful, isn't it?

Dennis: Oh. Extremely. And what parent doesn't enjoy hearing that.

Because you're well aware of where you've been flawed in your character, your failures, what the should've / could've / would'ves in a lifetime. What a privilege that somebody—maybe it was you Bob—that had somebody push the button to record that. Because we've now shared this, I'm convinced, with millions of men around the world. Just encouraging them to do what I attempted to do with my son, and it wasn't perfect in how I did it—to show him the way. His last words were—are what kids are looking for today. They want us to show them the way. It's the moral way. The spiritual way. The God way. The scriptural way. I can just attest because both Barbara and I are aware of our failures. You don't have to be perfect to show somebody else the way. In fact, my life verse—I've got it open here in my Bible—is Psalm 112:1-2.

It's got my granddaughter, Molly, who lived seven days. It's got her handprint on the verse. The verse says "Praise the Lord! Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in His commandments! His offspring will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed." We called her mighty Molly. We never know how long we'll have. Whether it will be seven days, 70 years, we don't know. But God calls each of us to give account of our lives to Him, and to show the next generation the way. That's really the message of today's broadcast.

Michelle: *FamilyLife Today* is brought to you by FamilyLife in Little Rock, Arkansas. And although FamilyLife is located in the United States of America, we understand that our cultures vary but the issues facing us are similar. We all have joys in life, we all struggle and we all want to love and be loved. And we want your family, your marriage and your relationships to succeed.

FamilyLife's mission is to effectively develop godly families, the kind of families that change the world one home at a time. A key part of our mission includes strengthening marriages and families all around the world. We want to do whatever we can do to bring timeless truth to bare on the challenges you face as you seek to strengthen your family.

You can find out more about FamilyLife by visiting our website FamilyLifeGlobal.com. Again that's FamilyLifeGlobal.com. And while you are there click on the radio button to listen to other *FamilyLife Today* broadcasts. Again that's FamilyLifeGlobal.com.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, and our global broadcast manager Rhonda Street. I also want to thank our editor Larry Loraine. For Dennis Rainey and Bob Lepine, I'm Michelle Hill and I invite you to join us again for another edition of *FamilyLife Today*.

FamilyLife: Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

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