Radio
Family Life Today
Tribute Stories: Honoring Mom and Dad
Honoring My Mom
Dan Jarrell
Day 2 of 5
050315

Bob: One of the most challenging assignments any of us will ever face is the assignment of raising the next generation, and all of us find ourselves at some point asking a fundamental question – are we doing okay? Here is Dan Jarrell.

Dan: I think no matter how good of a parent you really are, you cannot escape the need to look to your children to affirm you as a parent. You talk to young parents, one of their biggest battles is – am I doing the right thing – and how do they determine that? Well, how do the kids respond to me? But the older we get, when you have grown kids, I think there is a sense in which a parent looks to the kids to affirm them as a parent.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Tuesday, March 15th. Our host is the president of FamilyLife, Dennis Rainey, and I'm Bob Lepine. If your parents are still alive, I guarantee you, they'd love to hear you say, "Mom, Dad, you did good." And welcome to FamilyLife Today, thanks for joining us on the Tuesday edition of our broadcast.

Dennis: Bob, I've got a question for you.

Bob: Yes, sir?

Dennis: What would you say is the best gift you have ever given your mom?

Bob: Oh, the best one I've ever given my mom.

Dennis: The best one you've ever given. I just want our listeners to know this is not a set up. I don't know how he's going to answer this. He may not answer it like I think he might, but we'll see how he answers it. And if we can't remember the right answer, we may call his mom to get the right answer.

Bob: I'm trying to search through what I've given my mom – you know, as your parents get older, trying to find anything worthwhile to give them – in fact, for the last several years …
Dennis: They've got everything.

Bob: My mom has said she wants a new pair of slippers every year, and there's a kind that she likes that has a high heel, and they cost, like, $6.99 at Penney's, you know, and so I'm trying to think, you know, it's been hard for the last several years, but, under duress, I was required by you …

Dennis: Our listeners can remember – some of our faithful and loyal listeners remember that I shamed you here on the broadcast …

Bob: … into finally giving my mom her tribute. So at Christmas time, we had it over at her house. We went over with the whole family, and the kids opened their presents first, and we kind of saved this one for last, and I sat down on a chair, and mom sat down on the chair next to me, because this was going to be something that we read together. And we opened her tribute, which I had done a little differently. You know, a lot of people will have a tribute done, and they put it in a frame, and they …

Dennis: Yes, you figured a way to be a non-conformist even in following through.

Bob: That's right, and part of the reason for this was just because I'm a terrible editor, and I couldn't edit my work after I was done with it, and there was just too much to say. But I actually had Mom's tribute done and bound in a small book.

Dennis: Hardback book.

Bob: I took it to a local bookbindery, and, you know, you look in the Yellow Pages, and most cities have a little bookbindery, somebody that's doing that kind of work, and you can do that. I printed it out on the laser printer, used green ink, because she likes the color green, and got some fancy stationery to print it on, and got it all cut together, and then took it down to the book bindery, and they bound it, and so she has, on her coffee table today, the tribute that I did for her that's in a book that sits there. It's titled "The Memory Box," and it's got a tribute to my mom from Bob Lepine.

Dennis: Now, do you really think that's the most significant gift you've ever given her?

Bob: Well, it's one of the only ones I can remember, so I would imagine it beats the slippers all to pieces.

Dennis: You know, I'm thinking, if it's okay with your mom, we're going to put your tribute to your mom on our website so our listeners who want to go
to our website at FamilyLife.com can take a look at that tribute and see what Bob said to his mom.

Now, if you go to that site, and it's not there, it will be because Mrs. Lepine …

Bob: … said no.

Dennis: Said no to me.

Bob: We'll put a little sign there that says, "You cannot read my tribute, signed Mrs. Lepine."

Dennis: It's her tribute, it's not yours now, so, anyway – on the broadcast today we're going to take you into a story of really why parents need to have honor brought back home. Exodus 20:12 is one of the Ten Commandments. It commands us to honor our mother and our father. And Dan Jarrell joins us on the broadcast today. Dan and his wife Kathy speak at our FamilyLife Marriage Conferences all around the country and, Bob, he tells a story of – well, it's why we need to take home honor because we've hurt our parents deeply.

Dan: You know, that was the late '60s, and as soon as I got 16 or so, early '70s, I started smoking a lot of pot, and I was a musician, and so to earn a little extra money, I played music in bars and taverns there in Ashland, Oregon. I mean, you're 16 years old playing music in a nightclub, and with that comes all the alcohol and the drugs and this, that, and the other thing, and the older men and older women that are involved and interacting with you, and I guess I kind of thought I was pretty hot. I was a party waiting for a place to happen.

Dennis: What happened to your relationship with your mom?

Dan: Well, I think – my mom was very careful. She confronted me, but she wanted to maintain a relationship with me. I got deceptive, lied to my mother about where I was and what I was doing. I'll bet my junior in high school, I don't think a single day went by I didn't get stoned, except during football season.

Dennis: Now, you're speaking of when you were 16 or 17 years old?

Dan: That's right – except during football season. For some reason I had some weird value that when you were in training, you kept training. Other than that – I was bored, school was boring to me, and so my buddies and I just – that's all we did.
Bob: Did your mom know it?

Dan: I don't know. She tells me today, "Well, you didn't pull any wool over my eyes. I knew what was going on," but I don't think she knew the extent of it. To this day, I don't think she knows the extent, and I'm not so sure she needs to. I'll never forget, my junior year, believe it or not, a coach caught me smoking a joint down in the locker room, and they kicked me out of school for a week, and I had to go down to the Chamber of Commerce where my mom was working at a little minimum-wage job and tell her I'd been booted out of school.

So the signs were there that I was having trouble, and it was my senior year that I actually was arrested for that. And my mom put me to work pulling weeds and I convinced her I wasn't struggling, having the problem anymore, and, I'll tell you what, it's unbelievable how good you can get at lying to people.

Dennis: She really wasn't in control of you at all, then, as a teenager?

Dan: No, she couldn't have been. She tried, but she couldn't control me. I was too big. I was going to do what I wanted to do. I think, also, my father had set the parameters. He had played that role. I don't know how much of a partner she had been in that, but you know what it's like when you first have your children. You second-guess every discipline and everything that you do, and my mom was second-guessing some of those things, and I think afraid of driving me away.

Bob: If a mom came to you, as a pastor today, and said, "I've got a 17-year-old Dan Jarrell on my hands."

Dan: I'd say, "Kill him now and get it over with."

Dennis: Take out a hit, huh?

Dan: That's right, euthanasia. I think what I'd say to her was be firm. Don't waffle. Lay down the law and do it in a loving, compassionate way, but lay out those family values in your home – "These are going to be the values in my home and, son, I love you. You may be 16 and think you run the world, but you can't live here apart from these rules."

So – now, I'm not saying kick him out on the street or something, but – and the other thing I think I'd have done, if she's a single mom, I'd have sought help. You know, there were other men that could have been involved in our life – relatives and coaches, people like that. And I think my mother's desire to do it on her own and to be strong and to be all that
we needed probably kept her from saying to a pastor or to a coach or to someone, "I'm worried about my son. Will you invest some time in him?"

Bob: Do you remember getting arrested?

Dan: Yes, I remember it. I remember it vividly. See, I had turned 18. The other two guys I was with were both under 18. So they got a little slap on the wrist, and Mom and Dad came and got them. I got hauled over to the county lockup, strip searched, and thrown in the felony tank. I'll never forget those doors.

Dennis: All because you had some drugs in the car with you?

Dan: That's right. I think we had an ounce of marijuana, and we were smoking marijuana, and at that time – you see, that was pre-'73 – possession of any amount of marijuana was criminal activity in narcotics. It was, what, a class C felony. And today, I mean, it's a misdemeanor. They give you a ticket, but in those days it wasn't. Frankly, I'm thankful that happened, because that's just one more of the many events the Lord used to get my attention.

There's something about being thrown in jail with a guy who is there on manslaughter and, all of a sudden, those electric doors behind you clink locked, and they do a strip search before they send you in there and, all of a sudden, you say, "This is for keeps."

Bob: And did the Lord get your attention at that point?

Dan: Well, no, I didn't make a commitment to Christ at that time. Fear got me attention. I remember after getting bailed out, I went home and found every ounce, every gram of marijuana I could find and flushed it down the toilet. But that lasted a few days.

Bob: And then you were right back at it?

Dan: Partying again – my buddies were there to console me – console me they did.

Dennis: Four years later you did turn to Christ?

Dan: That's right. I actually turned – came to the Lord through the study of geology. I had started college as a music major, and about at 21 ran up headlong against the fact that I was really mediocre musically. Now, you know, I could tell a joke and play some music in a smoke-filled room, but …
Dennis: As long as they were about half-drunk …

Dan: That's right, that's right. But the further I got away from that – in college I was with musicians that were really musicians, and I'm driven to exceed expectations. I don't want to be average in anything. So I got out of that, and tuition was already paid, so I took a geology class – became a geofanatic for a while. And through the study of the earth, I just began to ask some serious questions about who God was. I came to know Christ when I was 22.

Dennis: That began to change your relationship with your mom, didn't it?

Dan: Yes, it really did. At first for the worst, because when I began to get serious about Christ, and began to share some of those things with her, my mother's values were, I think, confronted by that. And she saw that as a rejection of her and of my religious upbringing.

Dennis: And all she tried to do as a single parent mom?

Dan: Well, yeah, I think that dynamic is probably there. You know, "What are you saying? That now you've received Christ, and you've finally seen the truth? Now, what does that imply about what I've been telling you all these years?"

Bob: That's so key. I think we just need to park here for a second, because I don't think many of us realize that in adolescence or in post-adolescence, when we come to Christ, and we're now excited about our faith in Christ, and we share it with our parents, that that comes through as a repudiation of all they've done.

Dan: Absolutely.

Bob: And we don't have the wisdom or the tact at that point to know how to affirm the job they've done, and, in fact, in some cases we may not want to affirm the job they've done at that point.

Dan: Yes, and I don't know, to be honest with you, Bob, whether or not you can avoid that. Because for me to be excited about Christ and to share any of that with my parents, there's just a natural conflict that's going to result, and it got worse the older I got. As I decided to – I finished my degree in geology but decided to leave geology and go to seminary.

Dennis: Now, before you go on, I just want to park there for a second, because I think there's a reason, Bob, why parents feel this sense of great, overwhelming rejection when their kids come back, and that reason is I think most parents don't really feel appreciated for the job they've done;
don't really feel successful in the job they've done, and so they're really still wondering if all that I have done for my son or daughter has stuck, is appreciated, does matter, does value, and so they're wallowing in self-doubt, and now here comes back this religious lunatic, fanatic, and it's even more the slap in the face to those who wonder – "Did I do a good job?"

Bob: And what can often happen at that point is that a wedge gets implanted between parent and child that throughout the years will either be driven deeper, forcing them farther apart, or will reach a point where it's removed and where healing begins to happen.

Dan: That's exactly right. In fact, I think, no matter how good of a parent you really are, you cannot escape the need or the temptation to look to your children to affirm you as a parent. You talk to young parents, who have young children; one of their biggest battles is – am I doing the right thing – and how do they determine that? Well, how do the kids respond to me? Well, that's the worst determination. But the older we get, when you have grown kids, I think there is a sense in which a parent looks to the kids to affirm them as a parent.

Dennis: And so we come back to the commandment in the Ten Commandments – honor.

Dan: Right, that's right. And writing a tribute of honor to my mother, even though it took 18 years or so since I've come to the Lord, that removed that wedge.

Bob: So you were how old when you wrote the tribute for your mom?

Dan: Well, it's just been a year-and-a-half, so I was 37.

Dennis: It took you a while to get there then?

Dan: It took me a while to get there, and I wasn't even sure that I needed to do it and, frankly, something you said at a retreat we were at – you just challenged us to do it, and I just said, "Okay, my mom deserves that." I was at a stage in my life where I realized that for any woman to raise three teenage kids and hang in there and just be faithful – that was phenomenal. So I decided I was going to write something that would indicate to my mom that I was proud of the job she had done.

Bob: Describe for us what your relationship with your mom was like at that point – at age 37 when Dennis challenged you to write a tribute to her?
Dan: Okay – strained. Probably, if you'd asked her, she wouldn't have said that, but you need to understand I come from a home where there really are two things you don't talk about – you don't talk about politics or religion. Well, that's okay except …

Bob: It kind of shuts down the conversation where you're concerned.

Dan: Yeah, I mean, okay, "Now, how is your work?" Well, I'm a pastor at a local church, and so much of that has to do with my spiritual life and what God is doing in my family, and if my mom wants to know about the kids, well, I mean, the spiritual dynamic of our family is very essential. And every time I would begin to talk about that, it would be a sense of tension that maybe I was trying to persuade her or that I didn't think she really knew the truth and somehow I had discovered it.

Dennis: Going back to when you were 22 again.

Dan: Absolutely.

Dennis: Here it was 15 years later, she's still feeling this sense of rejection around spiritual issues, so she declares it "No Trespassing," "Off Limits," "Don't enter this territory."

Dan: That's right – and a compounded problem is my home is different than my siblings' homes. The values in my home – we don't use particular words in my home that might be used in one of my brother's or sister's homes and were used in my home. My mom has to modify her behavior when she visits our house. So it's kind of, like, you know, going over to have dinner with the preacher every Friday night. You're on your best behavior and – you know what I mean?

Bob: And that does come across to our parents as being condescending.

Dan: Condescending, arrogant …

Bob: You're not good enough anymore.

Dan: That's right.

Dennis: It's kind of, like, "Wait a second, I'm the parent here."

Dan: That's right, and especially in the areas of character and values – not skills. That's why, in my tribute, I focused on the issues of character in my mom, not just what she did but why she did it, and the motive and things behind that. That was very important, I think, for her to see that I saw substance in her character.
Bob: Well, we have been listening together to a conversation that was recorded a while ago with one of the pastors from ChangePoint Church in Anchorage, Alaska – Dan Jarrell. And, still to come this week, we're going to hear him tell about the process of honoring his mother and giving her the tribute that he wrote for her and, I'll tell you, it's a moving account that he tells.

Dennis: You know, Bob, it occurs to me, listening to Dan here, that the reason why we need to honor our parents is even the best of children disappoints his or her mom or dad. In fact, just yesterday you and I were having lunch together, along with another Christian leader, talking about how our teenagers were – well, they were challenged as we raised them to maturity, and our hearts ached for them and at times they are a pain. They cause grief to the soul of a parent – some for years.

And, Bob, it's because of that pain, it's because of that grief, it's because of the anguish of raising children to maturity that children can never know, they can never experience until they become a parent, that I think we need to return home with honor.

Bob: In your book, "The Best Gift You Can Ever Give Your Parents," one of your chapters is entitled, "Your Parents Are Waiting," and you say there that there are two primary reasons why we should honor our parents. One is because the Bible declares that our parents are worthy of honor, and the second reason is because honor gives parents hope and encouragement when they need it the most.

I just want to read a portion of what you write here. You say, "It's become very clear that parents today can suffer from an intense loneliness. Instead of reliving wonderful memories and enjoying the fruits of their child-rearing years, many parents experience an intense ache in their heart because they are no longer vitally connected with their children. They think back to the years when their children were young, when their children loved being with them, and they wonder – 'Do you recognize the sacrifices we made for you?' Introspective and lonely, parents wait, and they may not know what they're waiting for. And so, naturally, when adult children fail to recognize their parents' need for honor, it doesn't happen, and that's why a lot of parents are still waiting."

We're hoping that this year on Mother's Day or Father's Day, some of the parents who are waiting will wait no longer. We're hoping that many of our listeners will heed your counsel, Dennis – get a copy of your book, "The Best Gift You Could Ever Give Your Parents," and start the process now of writing a tribute that could be framed and presented to a mom on Mother's Day or a dad on Father's Day.
We've got copies of your book in our FamilyLife Resource Center. You can go to our website to request a copy. Go to FamilyLife.com, and at the bottom of the screen there's a little button that says, "Go," with "Today's Resources" around it. Click on that button, and it will take you right to a page where you can get more information about the book, or you can order a copy directly from us from that same page.

There may be some of our listeners, Dennis, who we realize are going to need to wrestle with issues related to forgiveness as they begin this process, and so we're recommending a book called, "From Forgiven to Forgiving." It's available from our FamilyLife Resource Center as well, and any of our listeners who would like to get both of these books, we'll be happy to send along at no additional cost either the CDs or the cassettes of this week's programs on FamilyLife Today.

Again, go to FamilyLife.com to request these resources or give us a call at 1-800-FLTODAY. That's 1-800-F-as-in-family, L-as-in-life, and then the word TODAY, and we'll be happy to get these resources sent out to you.

Back a year ago, the biggest movie in the movie theaters was Mel Gibson's movie, "The Passion," and it was a powerful, stirring movie. It sparked some degree of controversy, and it was a movie that a lot of parents decided was not appropriate for children. And this year, as Easter approaches, we thought about something special we wanted to do for FamilyLife Today listeners who would help with a donation for the ministry of FamilyLife Today during the month of March.

The most widely seen movie about the life of Jesus is called "Jesus, the Movie," and it has recently been digitally remastered and put on DVD along with a second movie called "The Story of Jesus for Children." The first movie is appropriate for all ages, but "The Story of Jesus for Children" is particularly appropriate for younger children, for elementary age and younger children. Both are together on a single DVD, and we wanted to send this to any of our listeners who would help support the ministry of FamilyLife Today this month.

All you have to do is make a donation and request the movie when you do. You can go online to donate at FamilyLife.com, and as you're filling out all of the boxes, you'll see one that says "keycode." Type the word "Jesus" into that keycode box, and we'll send you a copy of the DVD as a thank you gift for your financial support. Or you can call us to make a donation at 1-800-FLTODAY and just let whoever answers know that you'd like a copy of the DVD, and we'll be happy to send that out to you.
Let me again say thanks to those of you who pray for us and those of you who help support this ministry. We are listener-supported, and your donations help keep us on the air on this station and on stations all across the country. So we appreciate you.

Well, tomorrow we're going to be back to hear part 2 of Dan Jarrell's story about honoring his mom, and we'll hear about what happened when he presented her with his tribute. I hope you can be here for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, and our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our host, Dennis Rainey, I'm Bob Lepine. We will see you tomorrow for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

FamilyLife Today is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas, a ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ.