Bob: For years Barbara Wilson kept the shame of a sinful past hidden away where no one knew the details. What she didn't realize is that her secret sin was destroying her, and when she finally came clean, and her sins came to light, she found liberation.

Barbara: And that's what's so amazing about God's grace, is as the shame began to go away, and as He began to do this healing process in me, I wanted to tell people because I wanted them to have hope; I wanted them to know that wherever they were in their life; that whatever the enemy was holding them down with that they could fly again; they could be free, and they could have – be unleashed to be all the God created them to be, and I really felt that God was doing that in me.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Monday, May 12th. Our host is the president of FamilyLife, Dennis Rainey, and I'm Bob Lepine. We'll talk today about keeping the sins of the past hidden away or confessing them, bringing them to light. Stay tuned.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today, thanks for joining us. You would agree with me that marriage brings challenges, right?

Dennis: No doubt.

Bob: I think the thing that most people are surprised by today is that there's a whole generation of people getting married with some fresh challenges that they are not even aware of when they stand and say "I do."

Dennis: Now, that's an understatement. There is a generation of young people today who are getting married, and they don't even realize the baggage that they are transporting into their relationship with their new spouse. And then you start unpacking those bags together, and that can be a real challenge.

And we have a guest with us on the broadcast today – Barbara Wilson, who is going to – well, not only help us identify the bags, but also know how to properly
go about unpacking them and then get free of that baggage and be set free. Barbara, welcome to the broadcast.

**Barbara:** Thank you, it's great to be here.

**Dennis:** Barbara and her husband, Eric, have four children. They live in the Sacramento area. Barbara is a director of abstinence for a faith-based alternative pregnancy resource center in Sacramento, and I think because of that, Barbara has a unique slant into the subject we are going to be talking about today, which is around your past.

And we ought to say at the outset, Bob, we may be talking about some subjects today dealing with the past, the sexual past of adults that might be inappropriate for young people, so parents perhaps ought to just take note of that.

Barbara has written a book called "The Invisible Bond, How to Break Free from Your Sexual Past." Barbara, for you, you kept silent about your story for more than 25 years.

**Barbara:** Mm-hm.

**Dennis:** What caused you to – well, to talk about, come out in the open and then begin to develop this material that has so encouraged others?

**Barbara:** Well, that's an incredible journey that God has just been so faithful to pursue me. For 25 years, as you said, I didn't talk about anything in my past, and I was in the church, raising my children, and serving, but nobody was talking like they had any kind of sexual past or that they had had an abortion or anything that was shameful. All of that stuff was kind of kept secret, and so I just assumed that I must have been the only one who kind of messed up in my past.

**Dennis:** You think other people assume that, as well, Barbara?

**Barbara:** I think so, because even amongst my close friends, they didn't know the truth about me. And so I just felt like if I brought that out, number one, people would reject me, people would not be able to see me who I really was and, number two, that I would never again be able to serve in a church. That was kind of like my thought. You know, once I kind of revealed what happened to me in my past, I wouldn't be able to be used, people wouldn't want me to serve, and I just really felt, even from God, that I kind of missed my chance to really be used by God.

And so the journey started for me really when God moved us from Canada to California, and here I was, I had been very busy serving and serving the church, you know, you kind of get – your life is so crazy, and I didn't allow myself to really
think about things. I tried not to, anyway, whenever those thoughts would surface, I'd stuff them back down into the little box I'd put them in.

And then I came to California, and I didn't know anybody, and I wasn't serving the church, and I was just – it was just me and God, that's what it felt like, and He really began to speak to me clearly about some of these issues, specifically my abortion is where we started.

I kept saying, "God, aren't we done with this? I mean, I'm sure I've asked you to forgive me at least 25 times a year for the past 25 years. I'm sure we're really cleared up on that." And He just kept saying, "No, we've got to look – I want you to look at this. There is still more here that you don't see," and that's when God began to show me the different between forgiveness and healing.

Yes, I had been forgiven, all those times I'd asked him, even the very first time, but there was something about the wound of abortion and your sexual past that goes to such a deep level that stays there and impacts you over and over and over again until you bring it out into the open and God is able to shine His truth on it and set you free from it.

And so He began to compel me to start telling people, and I remember the thought was I was going to have to tell my kids. And that was – I would – I remember thinking "Just stick a knife into me." I would rather die first than have to tell my kids because your kids think you're awesome and wonderful, and you just hate to shatter that image that they have in their mind. And so that was scary for me.

But, you know, I don't think that's going to be everyone's journey, necessarily, to have to tell your children. I think, obviously, God knew he was going to use me to share my story publicly and so, of course, that was necessary.

Dennis: You had been married for how many years at this point?

Barbara: Probably 19 or 20 years.

Dennis: Had you told your husband?

Barbara: Yes, my husband was the only one that knew my whole story.

Dennis: When did you tell him – the story?

Barbara: Before we got married. So he knew everything.

Dennis: There are those who do get married.

Barbara: Mm-hm.
**Dennis:** You know where I'm going with this?

**Barbara:** Yes, and they haven't told their husbands anything. And that really complicates things, because they've brought all of that into their marriage, and their husbands don't understand why they behave the way they do or why do they struggle with sex in their marriage or why do they have this wall up emotionally with them, and they don't understand any of that. But that's where God begins drawing that out of us, and that's what He did for me, and what's interesting is, is when you're still in the midst of your shame and pain, you really have to be careful who you share that with, because it can be a negative experience if you share it with someone who doesn't offer you grace and then makes you feel condemned, and then you just, like, that's what happened to me earlier on in my life.

I was married before, married as basically a child as far as I'm concerned. I was 18, and the marriage only lasted two years, and then when I went to get married again, none of my mom's family came to my wedding because they didn't endorse the wedding and everything, and that just confirmed at me, "Okay, Christians don't do these kinds of things and, obviously, if they can't deal with a divorce, they'd never be able to handle the abortion," and that's one of the reasons I kept silent.

**Dennis:** Okay, let's go all the way back to the beginning of your journey. You grew up as a PK, a pastor's kid.

**Barbara:** Yes, I did.

**Dennis:** And your dad was a minister, and so you grew up with great standards, great protection. Did you have a good sex education as a little girl growing up?

**Barbara:** We didn't have any sex education. My parents never talked to me about sex, in church they didn't talk to us about sex, they didn't talk to us about sex in school, just except for the anatomy. I didn't know anything about sex. All I knew was I believed God said we were supposed to save sex for marriage. And I don't know I even knew that, it was probably through osmosis or something.

When I went off to school, I was 17, my parents were sending me off to a Christian school for my last year of high school, and it was – I feel like I was, like, this innocent lamb that was kind of sent off into the wolves without the guidance, the tools that I needed, to be able to maintain my purity.

And so I fell in love with my very first boyfriend, basically, and here we were in this environment where we could spend a lot of time together and not very supervised because I didn't have parents there, and we just got to know each other more and more, and just was in this close intimate environment, and we're
making out, making out, making out, and I really didn't know, like, I really wasn't all the clear about what encompassed all of sex, and we just kept getting closer and closer to that edge and then finally went over the edge, and we never – I never planned for it to happen. It never occurred to me that this could happen.

And that was really the beginning, you know, when I talk about how you open that – once you open that sexual pathway, so many things can happen, and it can just start to take you down a very destructive path that you never planned.

Bob: Were there warning bells going off in your head as a teenager, going, "Something is wrong here. I shouldn't be doing this?"

Barbara: Oh, yeah, absolutely. Now when I think back, because that was one of the things, I'm going, "Hey, God, like, where were you and how come I wasn't protected from that?" And there was definitely – you know, God was definitely clearly speaking to me, but, you know, I just thought this was the one, you know, and we're at a Christian school. This has to be, you know, God-ordained, you know, and I was going to marry this guy, and I think a lot of couples think, especially girls, you know, they think, "If I'm going to marry this guy, it's going to be okay. You know, we're going to eventually get married, it's not going to hurt if we have sex now."

Dennis: You know, at this point, Barbara, I don't want to rag on your parents because they are well-meaning people who undoubtedly did what they thought was the best, but it's really easiest to say nothing.

The world will educate our children if we don't do it. In fact, even if we do attempt to do it right, the world will still try to go about perverting and changing and try to destroy that child's innocence.

Bob: You did marry the boy at school that you had been having sex with.

Barbara: Yes, but didn't get pregnant with him.

Bob: Okay.

Barbara: The pregnancy happened later. So we ran away because my parents weren't in agreement, of course, and we lived together for a little while and then eventually got married, and the marriage was just – it didn't last at all and ended up two years later back at home, and now that I know a little bit more about sexual bonding, I realize that once you open that pathway, you actually are compelled to initiate sex even sooner in the next relationship and especially for women it validates who we are, and it validates the relationship, and I hear women say, you know, "I'll have sex with him because I know I'll be able to keep them," you know, so we're all out looking for Mr. Right, and then we have sex hoping that this is Mr. Right, and here I am, you know, I was starting to drink, and
so then I would be drinking and having sex with people that I barely knew, and that's where I got pregnant was kind of in those – you know, a short period of real promiscuity.

Bob: You said you were almost compelled to have sex earlier and earlier in the relationship? What do you mean "compelled?"

Barbara: Well, that's what happens with the bonding, once you open up that sexual pathway. In fact, this new research out on the brain and sex is so fascinating, where we actually release chemicals and hormones, and the chemicals that we release – endorphins and enkephalins and other things like dopamine are actual addictive chemicals. They actually work like heroin, cocaine, and marijuana in your brain, and so it makes you want to do that same activity over and over again, and specifically sex, which is probably one of the most addicting kind of activities that you can do.

So once you open that pathway, your brain wants to do that over and over again because your brain is triggered by things and goes, "Wow, you know, I experienced sexual pleasure with that before," and so you want to do it over and over again. And so every time, then, when you get into a new relationship, you'll actually be compelled to have sex even sooner because you've already opened that pathway.

Dennis: I feel compelled to say something. Just because the brain has these pathways and just because the brain does release this, doesn't mean we have to be a slave …

Barbara: Absolutely.

Dennis: … to that activity. And, in fact, that's what Jesus Christ came to do – He came to – well, He came to set us free from allowing sin to be our master, and He came to be our Master, and I just feel at this point, Bob, because there have to be listeners right now who – and they go, "Wow, gee, that explains it."

Bob: Yeah, "I just can't help myself."

Dennis: "I can't help myself anymore." But you know what? She did not say you are destined to have to repeat this. She just said that because it's occurred it makes it more likely.

Barbara: Absolutely.

Bob: And you said you were starting to drink. Was that trying to numb yourself so that – because there's a tension. You know there's something wrong with this, but if you drink you can kind of water down the inhibitions.
Barbara: Absolutely, and also you just start to feel so bad about yourself, you know, you just feel horrible, you feel dirty, you feel worthless, and I think you just kind of fall into that lifestyle. And it was interesting because I was still going to church on Sunday, I played the piano, and, you know, but I was just living this dual life, and, you know, and I think that's when I got pregnant. God really just kind of turned my life around and said, "Hey, what are you doing, you know, what are you doing?" And then I had the abortion, and I just couldn't believe that I had gone that far. Here I was, a Christian.

And one of the other things I think that kept me silent, too, was whenever I would hear anybody – if I did hear anybody talk about their abortion, let's say, on Christian radio, it would always be, "Well, I did this, this, and this, and had an abortion and then I became a Christian and ever since then my life's been perfect," and I thought, "Okay, that means, like, no one who is a Christian has ever done this." And so that was really also very hard for me.

Bob: Take us to the day when you thought, "I'm pregnant."

Dennis: How old were you?

Barbara: I was 21 -- 21 when I got pregnant. I was in college.

Bob: And you're playing piano at church.

Dennis: Did you know who the father was?

Barbara: Yes.

Dennis: You said you had been promiscuous. Lots of guys?

Barbara: Yeah, but then I would have periods where I'd have one boyfriend for a while, so I knew who the father was.

Dennis: Help us, as parents, understand what was taking place in a young lady's life who had been raised in this very proper home. What were you thinking? Or was it that you weren't thinking?

Barbara: I think I was so out of control, I didn't know how to make it stop, and I wanted to, but I didn't know how, and it was when I got pregnant that it was, like, reality set in, and it was what, you know, what are you doing with your life? What are you doing?

Dennis: Take us to the moment when you decided to have the abortion? I mean, what a huge moment for you, as a young lady, at that age to make that kind of life-altering decision.
Barbara: You know, it was – it's the most terrifying thing to find yourself pregnant, and I was in this very awkward position because, first of all, I was still married, technically, because in Canada you had to wait three years at that time to get a divorce. So I was still married, I'd already hurt my parents so much, and I didn't want to hurt them anymore, and I just felt like I didn't have an option. There wasn't even a question for me, and I think the other reason is, and I talk a lot with women, is God didn't create women to take life. He created women to give life, and I think that the only way that we can do that and be able to justify it and be able to do it physically is that we believe that it's just a blob of tissue and that's – at that point, that's what I believed.

"This isn't really a baby," and I just – there was just no other option for me, but, I'll tell you, at the time, they put us out to do it. It was almost like an operation, and it was – the most amazing thing happened. I don't really share this very often, but when I woke up, I heard someone in the room – I was in a recovery room with a lot of other women, and there was somebody wailing with this horrible wailing sound. I just sounded like someone had died, you know, and it was just this horrible, horrible sound, and this nurse came over, and they weren't very nice to us, of course, because they – they just weren't very nice to the women having abortions, and she came over, and she shook me, and she said, "Stop all that noise," she said. And I said, "What?" And it was me wailing this horrible wailing sound, and it was coming from the depths of my soul, I guess, you know, knowing what I had done.

And I do feel like I died that day as well, you know, as I took my child's life. But that's the exciting story is that God has resurrected that death out of me.

Bob: Barbara, 40 percent of women in this country of childbearing age have experienced an abortion. There are a lot of women who are listening to your story, and it's bringing up emotion and grief and shame, maybe they've never told anybody; maybe they've told people, but they still feel condemned.

Barbara: Mm-hm, absolutely.

Bob: What do you say to them?

Barbara: My heart hurts for them so much, and I know exactly how they're feeling and how hard it is to listen to this, and I just want them to know that God is an incredible Healer and Redeemer, and He can redeem all of that in your life. And to get healing, you know, so that it no longer impacts you and that God doesn't – you know, with forgiveness there is no more condemnation.

Dennis: You know, this is the essence of what Christianity offers. I mean, Jesus Christ stepped out of eternity to offer absolute, complete, 100 percent forgiveness – to wash our sins clean. And there is a verse, Isaiah 61:1, the Prophet Isaiah said, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has
anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted." You know, that's who we're talking about here. We're talking about women and, Bob, you mentioned 40 percent between the ages of 15 and 50—40 percent. These are not off somewhere else in another part of town. This is in our churches right now.

Bob: And nobody knows it.

Dennis: That means if you've got a woman to your right, and a woman to your left in church, and you're a woman, one of you has had an abortion, more than likely. Well, the prophet goes on to say, "To proclaim liberty to the captives and opening the door of the prison to those who are bound."

Jesus Christ is not a fairy tale. He is the Lord God. He stepped out of eternity, walked this planet, and He lived the perfect life, which none of us can live, and He went to the cross and died for our sins and took the penalty of that sin and the wrath of God because of that sin, and He died for it, and He was buried, and on the third day He rose again, and he's alive today and He's seated at the right hand of God the Father and because of that, because of where He is seated in a place of authority, He can offer forgiveness. He can offer eternal life to any woman who would cry out for it.

And, you know, there's a woman listening right now who identifies with Barbara here, and in her soul knows she needs forgiveness. Maybe it's not an abortion, maybe it's something else, but you know you need Jesus Christ right now, right now, is the moment when you need to take Him at His word. He offers you forgiveness and cleansing from your guilt to be able to take the next steps of being set free as a prisoner.

And, you know, Bob, that's what I really like about Barbara's book here. It is a book that doesn't just end with someone seeking forgiveness. There is a process we need to go through when we break God's laws that can result in us truly being set free.

Bob: The promise of the Gospel begins with forgiveness and then extends to transformation and, Barbara, even as you were sharing and remembering, and the emotion came up, that emotion is always going to be there, but it's different today because there has been a transformation that's taken place.

Barbara: You're right, you're so right, and even though, you know, I still am sad in my soul for what I did to my child, awesome as—she's in heaven with God, and I'm going to see her one day, but there is no more shame when I share my story. It's no longer about what I did.

Usually I identify myself with things I did, and now there is no more shame, there is no more condemnation, and there is more hope. I mean, not more hope, there
is complete hope in the fact that God can use my story to bring others to healing and to forgiveness.

**Bob:** And that's the third thing I was going to say – forgiveness then transformation and the hope. Those are the three things that are the promise of the Gospel – your past can be forgiven, your present can be changed, and your future can have a hope again, and that's what Jesus Christ offers in the message of the Gospel.

**Dennis:** And I just have to say again, if there is a woman or, for that matter, a man, who is listening to us today, and you haven't taken Christ at His word, and you've played church, you've been there, done that, but you've never made a personal commitment, I just want to compel you – take Christ at His word, receive the gift, and begin the process of a real life. It's not worth waiting another day. Do it right now.

**Bob:** We've got a resource that we would love to send you if you would like to understand what it means to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and how you can begin that relationship and how you can walk with Christ each day. It's a book called "Pursuing God," and we'd love to send it to you at no cost when you contact us by phone at 1-800-FLTODAY, just call and say, "I'd like the book, 'Pursuing God,' because I'd like to become a Christian," and we'll be happy to send it to you. Again, our toll-free number is 1-800-358-6329, that's 1-800-FLTODAY. Ask for a copy of the book, "Pursuing God." We're happy to send it out to you.

We also have copies of the book that Barbara Wilson has written called "The Invisible Bond" available in our FamilyLife Resource Center. You can go to our website, FamilyLife.com, and if you click where it says "Today's broadcast," on the right side of the home page, that will take you to the area of the site where there is more information about the resources that are available from us here at FamilyLife including Barbara's book and other resources designed to help folks who are struggling with these kinds of issues.

Again, the website is FamilyLife.com, or if you'd prefer you can also call 1-800-FLTODAY and mention that you'd like to receive a copy of Barbara's book.

Again, the title is "The Invisible Bond," and someone on our team will make arrangements to send a copy of the book out to you when you give us a call.

At this point, we are still just a few weeks away from the end of May, and that's the last opportunity we have, as a ministry, to take advantage of the matching gift opportunity that has been extended to us by some friends of our ministry. These are folks who agreed that they would be willing to match every donation we receive during the month of May on a dollar-for-dollar basis up to a grand total of $635,000.
Now, in order for us to take full advantage of that matching gift opportunity, we need to hear from as many of our listeners as possible, and that's why we have been reminding you this month that if you can make a donation either online at FamilyLife.com or by calling 1-800-FLTODAY, we would appreciate hearing from you. Your donation is doubled when you donate this month, and so we're hoping that whether it's $25 or $50 or $100 or $500 or $1,000, you will consider either donating on the website at FamilyLife.com or calling 1-800-FLTODAY.

Every donation we receive, again, is doubled on a dollar-for-dollar basis up to a total of $635,000, and that's why we hope to hear from you this month, and let me just say thanks in advance for your generous financial support of the ministry of FamilyLife Today. It is greatly needed and very much appreciated.

Tomorrow we're going to hear more from Barbara Wilson about her journey and hear about how she finally came to a point where she came clean and decided that her private story would become a very public story. I hope you can be with us 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'll see you back tomorrow for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

FamilyLife Today is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas – help for today; hope for tomorrow.

We are so happy to provide these transcripts for you. However, there is a cost to transcribe, create, and produce them for our website. If you've benefited from the broadcast transcripts, would you consider donating today to help defray the costs?

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