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Finding New Life and Love in Christ

Guest: Bill and Vicki Rose

From the series: Strike One, Strike Two, Strike Three – You're Out

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Bob: Although he was a young husband and father, Bill Rose found that he liked partying and cocaine better than being married. As a result, Bill and Vicki Rose's marriage was headed toward a divorce. But it never really got there.

Bill: It was actually in that room with the divorce attorneys, I'm not sure exactly what I said, but I said something to the effect was, you know, "We may be divorced but you'll always be my wife."

Vicki: He did, and at that point I had come to know the Lord, and I'm thinking, "Oh, my gosh, I've just been studying the Scriptures on marriage." Be married once and only – he doesn't even know the Lord, and he's speaking Scripture to me, because that's what I was starting to realize God wanted.

Bill: And I had no interest in knowing the Lord, and I truly thought this would be a very quick, passing deal.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Tuesday, December 9th. Our host is the president of FamilyLife, Dennis Rainey, and I'm Bob Lepine. How do you hang onto a marriage when your husband has moved out and likes his cocaine habit more than he likes you? We'll hear Bill and Vicki Rose's story today, stay tuned.

[musical transition]

And welcome to FamilyLife Today, thanks for joining us. You know, we've seen and talked to a lot of couples who have been at pretty low points in their marriage, in their relationship, for a variety of reasons, but we've been introduced to a couple this week who came to a point in their relationship – most couples will get here, and there is no – there is no coming back from this kind of a brink. But, as we'll hear today, this couple found a way back.

Dennis: Well, they did, but it was a dangerous brink, and as we're about to hear – this is quite a story, and as we heard earlier, Bill and Vicki Rose have quite a drama that started out in New York City. Bill was an owner in the New York Yankees, still is today. In fact, he's got one of the biggest rings I think I've every seen. You could use that thing as brass knuckles.
Bill: You haven't seen the Florida Marlin ring. It is three times this size.

Bob: Oh, my goodness!

Dennis: You need two hands to put that on, if it's three times that size, that's all I can say. He runs a sports management firm called DRM, he's the CEO of that. Vicki, along with Bill, is on the Board of Directors of Pro Athletes Outreach, which is a very effective ministry. It's been around for more than three decades. She is a teacher, a writer, speaker, and together they have two adult children who just recently got married, and they're looking forward to the grandparent scene.

Bob: And they went on their first date at Yankee Stadium and had a whirlwind season together before you popped the question on the way to a Red Sox game, right?

Bill: That's right.

Bob: And got married and, Vicki, you were working at Saks as a buyer for Saks Fifth Avenue, and you were living the New York party lifestyle, which began to drive a wedge in your relationship, as we've already heard this week. You were doing lines of coke together. You quit at one point – this was before you had children, right?

Vicki: Yes.

Bob: And then the kids came along. Bill, you didn't quit.

Bill: No.

Bob: You kept partying …

Dennis: In fact, Bill, I wanted to ask you a question about that. You mentioned earlier that you were taking up to four grams of cocaine a day.

Bill: Yeah, but that was a – understand that …

Bob: That was not a daily …

Bill: I put that in because that was probably the highest that ever happened.

Dennis: You were really addicted at that point.

Bill: But, you know, I was probably doing one gram a day, on an average.
Dennis: You know, help me understand something, and I'm not asking you to name names, but how does this happen? Where do you get this stuff that it's so accessible? I mean, some of us who didn't experience the drug culture, okay, we hear these stories, and we go, "How does that occur? That's illegal."

Bill: It was all over the place. I mean, you could get whatever you wanted from anybody. It's just not hard to find, and back then it was really prevalent, as well, among athletes. So …

Bob: So somebody would just say to you, "Hey, you need some coke?"

Bill: Somebody would say, "You want some?" Everybody carried it. I mean, you went to a party, everybody had it.

Bob: And a gram of coke would cost how much back then?

Bill: About $100.

Bob: So this was, this was …

Dennis: Your habit was a minimum of $100 a day.

Bill: Yeah, yeah.

Dennis: Up to $400?

Bill: Up to $400.

Dennis: Wow. Well …

Bill: But, don't forget, a lot of people would just give it to you because they wanted you to be part of the party and stuff, so a lot of times you paid for nothing.

Dennis: Well, it was destroying your relationship …

Bill: It was, it did.

Dennis: Or, actually, it had destroyed your relationship and, Vicki, you drew a line in the sand in 1986 and said, "I'm outta here."

Vicki: I asked him to leave, actually, at the time.

Bill: I was the one that was outta here.

Dennis: Yeah.
Vicki: I said I really can't live like this with the children and you doing this, and I love you, but I need you to leave, get your life cleaned up and, hopefully, you will.

Dennis: How hard was that to do for you?

Vicki: Oh, it was the hardest thing I'd ever done. All I thought about was how to fix this situation, how – if it wouldn't fix, if I would separate from Billy, how I would survive as a mom alone with two kids. I just didn't know how we would go on, and I couldn't live the way we were living anymore.

Bob: And when you drew the line and said, "You're outta here," did you know at that point how you were going to pay the rent at the end of the month?

Vicki: I had no idea about anything.

Bob: So it was …

Vicki: And Billy really – it's not that he went happily, but he knew, really, that it was time, that it was going to be done.

Bob: So did you just pack your bags and say, "All right."

Bill: I did.

Vicki: Pretty willingly.

Bill: Pretty willingly, I mean, because what was happening was, with her not doing what I was doing, she was sort of putting a crimp in my lifestyle.

Vicki: I was angry at him all the time. I had expectations every day for just a little window, a little glimmer of hope that the person that I loved and married would show up, and he didn't anymore. And so I was, every day, disappointed, every day making excuses, like my parents would say, "Come for dinner," you know, and it would be dinnertime, and Billy would say, you know, "I can't go." And so I'd make some excuse, you know, he has a cold, he doesn't feel well, and so life was just – I felt like I was just being dishonest every day of my life.

Bob: So the separation begins and, as far as you're concerned, is the marriage over? You never filed for divorce, right?

Vicki: We tried.

Bill: We got the – probably the highest profiled divorce attorney if not in the country, certainly in the state of New York, probably the country.

Dennis: What did you think about that, Vicki?
**Vicki:** It was silly, because we really didn't have a lot of assets between us, and I knew it was a move to try to scare me. I mean, it had been written up in the newspaper that Billy was in a restaurant with another girl. Even my dear father and stepmother sat me down and said, "Now, you should get back together because he can find another girl easily, but you're 35, and you have two children. It won't be so easy for you to remarry." And so it was just like a scare tactic to me.

**Dennis:** You were separated for five and a half years.

**Vicki:** Yes.

**Bill:** It was actually in that room with the divorce attorneys – I'm not sure exactly what I said, but I said something to the effect was, something like, you know, "We may be divorced, but you'll always be my wife."

**Vicki:** He did, and at that point, I had come to know the Lord, and I don't think he said anything about divorce. I think he said something more like "No matter what, you'll always be my wife," and I'm thinking, "Oh, my gosh, I've just been studying the Scriptures on marriage – be married once and only – he doesn't even know the Lord, and he's speaking the Scripture to me, because that's what I was starting to realize God wanted.

**Bill:** And I had no interesting in knowing the Lord, and we went to dinner one night to talk about the kids – this is one of my favorite stories – and there's a restaurant in New York, it's in a Billy Joel song, called Elaine's. We still go there all the time. And we sit down, we're having dinner …

**Vicki:** This is during the time we're separated.

**Bill:** Vicki tells me about her new-found faith, and Vicki has always been a very black-and-white person. We're getting a little more gray into her life, you know, thanks to me, but …

**Dennis:** After how many years?

**Bill:** After 31, but we're, we're, we're …

**Dennis:** You've been working on it.

**Bill:** I am working on it hard.

**Dennis:** There you go.
Bill: And so she’s telling me about her new-found faith, which I just think is one of her passing fads, and she’s telling me that if I don't believe what she believes, and my parents don't believe what she believes, that I'm going to hell, my father is going to hell, my mother is – we're all perishing, and I looked at her, and I said, "Vick, that's great, but, you know, my God is a lot more benevolent than that, and I just don’t see that at all." And just never got it and never – but …

Bob: Vicki, I want to take you back to before this dinner with your husband where you are sharing about perdition. How did you first hear the Gospel, and what was the point that you became a Christian?

Vicki: About a year and a half into our separation, I had just gone back to work. I was at Macy's & Company as a corporate buyer, and I had just returned from a trip to all across the Far East, Hong Kong and Taipei, and I'd landed in the hospital with an infected finger, and I came home from the hospital, and there was an invitation on the front hall table inviting me to a dinner party to hear Mr. and Mrs. Donald Hodel, the Secretary, and Mrs. Donald Hodel share about Christianity in the world today. And on the bottom it said, "Black tie."

And I thought, "Oh, wow, this is an opportunity to get dressed up and go out to dinner." I was a single mom for a year and a half, little opportunity to do that. And so I went to this dinner party, and I heard the Hodel's share their life story, in fact, and they shared some things that really paralleled my life with Billy. And they explained in their story how they had been churchgoers, but it was just a social act, which paralleled my life.

And they shared how their neighbors, when their son committed suicide, took them to a church where they heard the Bible taught, and they heard, for the first time, that God loved them and how to plan for their life but that they were separated from God because of what the Bible calls sin and that Jesus Christ is the bridge and the only way to be rejoined to God, and that we can simply ask Him into our lives.

And then at the end of their talk they offered us an opportunity to do that, to ask Jesus Christ into our lives, to begin that relationship with God, and I prayed and asked Jesus Christ into my life at that dinner party. There were 900 people at the Waldorf Astoria, and it was November 1987.

Bob: You were there by yourself?

Vicki: I was there by myself.

Bob: And the message just rang to the point that when everybody bowed their head you said, "I need this."
Vicki: Yes, absolutely. And I can't tell you that bells went off or anything dramatically changed at that moment, but I knew when I walked out that night that something had changed. When Billy and I first separated, his mom, actually, the day after we separated took me to an Al-Anon meeting, and I had started to learn about turning my life over to a higher power, as I know Him, and in Al-Anon they don't. They just talk about a higher power.

And so I had spent a year and a half going to meetings because I found some relief there for the first time. I had known nothing about addiction, I knew nothing about its best friend, co-dependency, and going to Al-Anon meetings really started to give me some relief from the craziness in my brain and in my life.

Bob: So when you heard the Gospel, you said …

Vicki: That's the missing piece of the puzzle.

Bob: That's the higher power?

Vicki: Yes, I knew that Jesus Christ was the higher power and the missing part of the puzzle, and finally there just started to be a calm for the first time, I think, ever, probably.

Dennis: You all ended up being separated, as we mentioned, for five and a half years. This is early in the separation.

Vicki: That's right.

Dennis: Now, Billy, I know you're not going to remember where you were the night she went to the Waldorf Astoria and heard the Gospel but, generally, what was your life consisting of at those moments?

Bill: I'm sure I was at the restaurant. I was there for usually about 15 hours a day, and probably after I got out of the restaurant would then go to some after-hours place and come home at 8, 9 in the morning, the sun was up.

Dennis: So you were just continuing the party lifestyle.

Bill: I was.

Dennis: You had no idea of the meeting she attended?

Bill: None.

Bob: Do you remember when you first heard that Vicki got religion?

Bill: Well, I mean, it was either at Elaine's that night at dinner, or I was home.
Vicki: I can remember very clearly.

Bill: I was home with the – I remember being home with the kids one night.

Vicki: At our apartment.

Bill: Yeah, and you came home, and I was watching the Yankee game, and they were losing or something bad happened, and I probably said a word I should not have said and, all of a sudden, out of her mouth is, "We don't use those words anymore in this house." I'm going, "Excuse me? What is that about?"

[laughter]

Vicki: And then I shared the four laws with him, I remember that very clearly, in our apartment.

Bob: You got out the booklet and went through, page by page, with him?

Vicki: I did. Well, I was in training to learn how to use the four laws, and I – actually, at my office, I went to all the cubicles and said, "I'm in a class, and I'd like to learn how to share this. Could I do it?" And so it was just naturally I desperately wanted to share it with Billy most of all.

Bob: And were you thinking, "She has flipped out?"

Bill: I truly thought this would be a very quick, passing deal.

Bob: Uh-huh, but it wasn't.

Bill: No, it was not.

Bob: And as you continued to party, and she continued to grow spiritually, and your paths continued to intersect, what were you thinking about the fact that this was sticking with her?

Dennis: Well, before you get there, I have to ask Vicki at this point – did you begin to notice your attitude toward him changing and your ability to love him in the midst of his brokenness, Vicki?

Vicki: Well, what happened is – yes, and about six months after I prayed to ask Christ into my life, the ministry offered a seminar, a weekend seminar on singles and dating. And I was, like, okay, here I am. I'm single, as I thought, and I'm now a Christian, and I'd like to learn how to properly date. So I went to the seminar and it was taught by a Christian counselor, and what I learned was I was
not single in the eyes of God. As long as I wasn't divorced from my husband, I was still married, actually, in God's eyes, and that I was not eligible to date at all.

I made an appointment to see the guy, the Christian counselor, a week later because I really wanted clarification. I said, "You've got to be kidding me. You know, Billy is living two blocks away from us with another woman, and we've been separated for two years, or two and a half years by then, and you mean I can't date? I'm not" – and he took me to different Scriptures and explained how one night of pleasure with a date would be very displeasing to God.

Dennis: And you also had a guy who had asked you to go to the Philharmonic at some point? Wasn't there a guy that asked you out?

**Vicki:** He was a great guy, really great looking guy, and a really nice guy at Bible study who was a believer, and he asked me out, and I actually accepted the date, and about three minutes later I hung up the phone, and I realized, "There's no way I can do that. There's no way I want to do something that I know is displeasing to God."

**Bob:** When you had some people in the church saying, "Oh, yeah, do it. Divorce him, get on with your life," right?

**Vicki:** Well, the counselor that I went to, he said, you know, you have every right to divorce. I think at this point you're being co-dependent. You should divorce Billy and get on with your life.

And so I went to my pastor, and he basically said the same thing, and so I went to one more, and he said the same thing.

**Bob:** So what kept you married if you've got all these guys who are saying, "Hey, you've got the "get out of jail free" card, and then you can go on your date to the Philharmonic and be happy.

**Vicki:** Right – reading the Word of God and starting to see what God said about marriage and divorce, and the first thing was that it says God hates divorce. And so I didn't want to divorce him, because I wanted to be married, and I wanted to please God, and I did not feel God's peace. I did not feel – as much as three different Christian authority figures said yes you can, in my heart of hearts, with what the Scripture said, I didn't feel the freedom to do that.

**Bob:** I'm just amazed at your tenacity and your dedication to do what the Scriptures said when everything in you is going, "But I want a husband, I want out, I want something, and I don't have it."

Dennis: Well, and she needed a father to the children, too. You're a single-parent mom at that point.
Vicki: I had spent 35 years of my life – I'd prayed to receive Christ in November of my 34th year, so doing everything my own way. I had wanted to be rich and famous, I wanted my life to have significance, you know, I'd married this guy, we were doing all these fancy things, and it had gotten me deep into a mess, and I had really planned it all out, in a sense, and it had not led down a good road at all.

And I was at the place where I realized who God was to the extent that I did at that time, how great He was and completely powerful and merciful and loving, and I wanted it His way. I did not want my own way anymore.

Dennis: You know, what we're hearing today are two stories – a story of hope that you represent, Vicki, and another life that you were living, Bill, that was still on a course to destruction. But because you, Vicki, did what Bob was talking about – you were courageous, you were steadfast, you hung in there; God used you to help get that message through to your husband.

Bob: Yeah, we haven't heard the end of the story.

Dennis: We haven't, we haven't, and as you were talking, I was just thinking, "Here is what Billy is seeing, and here is what you're experiencing – 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 17 – "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he [or she], is a new creation. Old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new."

Vicki: It's the first verse I memorized.

Dennis: That's the picture of what happens when Jesus Christ invades a person's soul. Christ didn't come to be a spare tire, He didn't come to be a hitchhiker, He came to be the driver, He came to be the one who sets the course, like you said, Vicki. You'd been doing it your own way, now you had the chance to do it His way and let Him direct your life.

I happen to believe we're talking to someone right now who is in a marriage like this or maybe just a single person who is lost and who needs the Savior. It's just as simple as how Vicki described it. You turn from yourself, you turn from being a lawbreaker, and you turn to the one who can forgive, and that's the one who paid the price for our sins, Jesus Christ. And because He's alive from the dead, He can enter our lives if we'll express our faith in Him and receive Him as our Savior and Lord and Master.

Bob: And it really is as simple, Dennis, as somebody who senses stirring in their own heart and their own soul. I need to make a change. The way life is going is not the way it ought to be going, and I need for my sins to be forgiven and I need for someone to transform my life, because I can't do it on my own. And when a
person says, "I believe Jesus is what I need. I believe that He can forgive my sin, I believe that He can transform my life." God honors that person's faith and begins the transforming process and grants forgiveness to that individual.

We've got a book we'd love to send to any listener who wants to put his faith in Christ today. The book is called "Pursuing God," and it helps walk you through a better understanding of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ and to trust Him for forgiveness of sins, to trust Him for the transformation of your life and to have the hope that He promises to those who are his followers.

You can call us at 1-800-FLTODAY and ask for a copy of the book, "Pursuing God." Again, we'll send it out to you at no cost to you to help introduce you to what it means to have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

The number to call is 1-800-FLTODAY, 1-800-358-6329. Just tell the person on the phone that you want to become a Christian, and they'll be happy to send this book out to you.

Let me also encourage our listeners, Dennis, to consider giving one another, this Christmas, a special Christmas gift – give each other a weekend away together at one of our Weekend to Remember Marriage Conferences. You can call us and get a gift certificate. We'll send it to you in a box that can be wrapped up and put under the tree, and the conference, by the way, is a whole new conference experience. If you've been before, you ought to come back and see how things have changed. I think folks are really going to be excited about the Weekend to Remember experience.

And you could start thinking now about how this is a Christmas gift, but you could decide to cash it in on Valentine’s Day weekend. Find a conference near you that weekend and get away together for a romantic getaway at one of our Weekend to Remember Marriage Conferences. And we're making the conference gift certificate available this week at a special price.

So if you'd like more information about how you can give one another the gift of a weekend away together this spring, to go FamilyLife.com and click on the right side of the screen where it says "Today's Broadcast." Look for the information about the Weekend to Remember gift certificate, and then plan to join us this spring, maybe Valentine’s Day, for a great weekend getaway as a couple at the new Weekend to Remember.

Again, our website is FamilyLife.com. You can also call for information about a gift certificate – 1-800-FLTODAY is the number, that's 1-800-358-6329, 1-800-F-as-in-family, L-as-in-life, and then the word TODAY.

And, finally, I just need to remind our listeners about the matching gift opportunity that has been made available to us this month. We've had some friends in the
ministry who have said that they will match every donation we receive in the month of December on a dollar-for-dollar basis up to a total of $425,000. So if you can help with a donation of any amount this month, it would be greatly appreciated.

We know it's been a tough year for a lot of families and a lot of businesses, it's been a tough year for a lot of ministries like ours and, frankly, we're hoping that if you can make a donation of any amount, that you'll make the effort to do that, either online or by calling 1-800-FLTODAY. Again, your donation will be matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis up to a total of $425,000. So either go online at FamilyLife.com or call us at 1-800-FLTODAY, and be as generous as you can in making a year-end donation to the ministry of FamilyLife Today. We really appreciate your support.

Well, tomorrow we're going to hear about how God got ahold of Bill Rose's life and began to do a work in him, but it wasn't really as fast as Vicki wanted it to be. That comes up tomorrow; 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.

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