Bob: Some of the characters in Karen Kingsbury's novels are special needs individuals, like the boy and the girl with Down syndrome in "Just Beyond the Clouds" – characters that some would think of as imperfect people. And yet Karen points out that each one of us is an imperfect person.

Karen: Vibrant, joyful life is lived, and we understand that the people God has given us do not need to be perfect. When we demand perfection from the people that we love, we cheat ourselves and them out of the love and the grace that Jesus asks us to be to them.

We are His hands, and we are His arms out into a world that is hurting, and that starts with the people that God has placed in our lives.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Tuesday, December 16th. Our host is the president of FamilyLife, Dennis Rainey, and I'm Bob Lepine. Are there imperfect people in your life that you have to deal with? Have you begun to see yourself as one of those imperfect people? Karen Kingsbury talks about that today. Stay tuned.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today, thanks for joining us.

Dennis: I want to continue the quiz that I started on yesterday’s broadcast.

Bob: I went three for three. You want to keep going at this?

Dennis: I want to see if you can hit six for six.

Bob: Okay.

Dennis: All right? These are stories related to the life of Jesus. I just want to see how well you really …

Bob: You’re going to pull out some obscure ones now, aren’t you? You’re going to try and stump me.
**Dennis:** No, no, no, I would not do that. You would do that to me, however. Okay, Bob, here is the first one – fish dinner.

**Bob:** Fish dinner – I go immediately to Jesus on the beach with Peter after the resurrection, is that right?

**Dennis:** You nailed it, that's exactly right. How about going fishing?

**Bob:** Going fishing – now I go to Luke, chapter 5, I think that's where it is. Peter has come in, he's been fishing all night, got nothing, they send him back out, and he catches all the fish?

**Dennis:** There you go, got it again.

**Bob:** Thank you, thank you, thank you.

**Dennis:** And then the last one – fishers of men.

**Bob:** Fishers – well, that's just the statement of Jesus, and is it right after the fishing thing where He says to Peter, "Join me, and I'll make you fishers of men?" I think that's right where that happened.

**Dennis:** I think He was going throughout the city, and He just started challenging guys, "Follow me, and I'll make you a fisher of men." So you didn't quite get that one.

**Bob:** Well, it's pretty close.

**Dennis:** [laughing and makes buzzing noise] Technicality! No, you got it, you got it. I think what I wanted to point out here was just how powerful a story can be in immediately allowing our minds and hearts to be captured by a concept. And this week we've heard from Karen Kingsbury, who is known as America's number one inspirational novelist. There's a good reason for that. She's sold 10 million – more than 10 million copies – 30 novels. She had the "Book of the Year" within the Christian Booksellers Association. She and her husband live in the Pacific Northwest, have six children, three of whom are adopted from Haiti. So she is kindred spirit, and she gave a message that you ran across that she was giving in Branson, Missouri.

**Bob:** That's right, speaking to a group of women and, really, just sharing with them about the power of a life well lived, living intentionally and purposefully and making your life count for something. And we thought it was a great message and one that we want to share with our listeners, and what you're hearing as you listen to this message is just one portion of a longer message and at the end of today's program, I'll let you know you can get a copy of the complete message, if you'd like to hear it. But here is Karen Kingsbury.
Karen: [from audiotape.] I looked it up in Webster, and the dictionary defines life three ways – "the stretch of time between birth and death; the punishment or sentence that brings death" and, finally, "abundant, vibrant, minute-by-minute living." And that, my friends, is the life that Jesus Christ has called us to live – vibrant, joyful life. And that kind of life is when that happens between Sundays.

It's funny, God always lets me mix a little bit of real life with my novels, and a little more than a year ago we went, and we watched Alex Smith, the quarterback of the San Francisco 49ers and his family reads my books. They invited us to come and be their guests at a game.

And after the game, I was talking to Alex and about his foundation for foster kids, and his deep love for kids who are disadvantaged. And I said, "Tell me about it." And he said, "Well, you know, at the end of the day, I don't want to be remembered for my performance on Sunday, but for how I live my life between Sundays." So – amen.

[applause]

And that is so true of us as well. We can get dressed up, and we can go, and we can have a great time at worship, and we can be right there with what the preacher is saying on Sunday morning, but life is lived between Sundays. When I had the chance to write that novel, "Between Sundays," it came out last year, that was the message – how are you spending your time? How will you be remembered? What will the title be of the book of your life?

What is it that the people in our lives are asking of us? Is it that extra phone call or letter? Is it a quick trip to Starbucks just to catch up? Is it that chance to get on the floor and play trucks with our little toddler, or is it the chance to listen to what our daughter is really saying about her friends in high school?

What are the people that God has placed in our lives asking of us? How can we hear them better so that this chapter in the book of our lives will be so much more meaningful so that the people who we love know that we have not given up on them, and that they are more important than anything – even a sea lion show?

I wrote a book that came out this year that – when I write children's books, I just write completely out of my heart of being a mom. I really don't ever expect them to get published, I'm not even thinking about that, it's just something I want to say to them, and around our house, we talk about going on "Mommy dates," or "Daddy dates," and so one of my newer books is "Let's Go On a Mommy Date," because we say that around our house.

And in this book it's kind of fun and whimsical, and it talks about we could go here or there and, for whatever reason, each one of the places the mom could
take the child, isn't just going to work out today, but I wanted to read you the last page because this is what it means to spend that time together.

It says, "Hey, wait. You're here beside me now. Is this our Mommy date? Never mind the other places, here we are, why wait? One day we'll go to the park, the circus, farm and zoo but, for today, let's cuddle with this book, just me and you. See, time will take you far from here, you're growing way too fast. All I want is Mommy time to make the moments last; something we'll remember so that, come some faroff day, you'll know how much I loved you because we took the time to play." Amen, thank you.

[applause]

See, when it comes to our kids, they really don't care. They just want that time with us, you know? And when we read to our kids, we're doing so much more than expanding their minds and helping them to have a love for reading, which will lead them into a love of the Lord because they'll need to be good readers to read the Word. So we're doing so much more than that. We're building a bond and a bridge that will last all through their years. I really encourage you to read to your kids, your grandkids, your Sunday school kids.

One of my characters, Ashley, she was going to her son, Cole's – one of his first basketball games, and there was this man, and he was yelling at his little boy, and she noticed this, and it kind of reminded her not to be overzealous applauding for her child. And the man just kind of got worse and worse as the game went on, and he finally got so frustrated, he walked down and got himself down by the edge of the court and glaring at his child and talking through clenched teeth, and these little guys were eight, and he was yelling out at that little boy, and he was saying, "I told you to look up when you dribble, you're looking down! Oh! Rebound! What are you doing! How could you miss that shot!"

And Ashley is watching this, and she's horrified. And she thinks to herself as that game ends, and as they head out to the car, "How tragic that that little boy will grow up in the state of Indiana and hate basketball."

[laughter]

But, more than that, how tragic that he'll grow up to hate his dad.

When we demand perfection from the people that we love, we cheat ourselves and them out of the love and the grace that Jesus asks us to be to them. We are His hands, and we are His arms out into a world that is hurting, and that starts with the people that God has placed in our lives – vibrant, joyful, life is lived when we understand that the people God has given us do not need to be perfect.
There was a woman in my Bible study when I had Austin. Austin was born with a serious heart defect, and he had emergency heart surgery when he turned three weeks old, and there's nothing quite like taking your newborn and knowing that there is less than a 50 percent chance you'll ever see him again this side of heaven and handing him over to the arms of a surgeon, and you have tears streaming down your face, and the surgeon has tears streaming down his face, and nothing quite like that amazing joy when four hours later you find out that you have your child and that God has completely healed him. Amen, thank you, Lord.

[applause]

I had a friend, Ann, her last name is Flanagan – I used that name in my Baxter series in honor of her. She would bring me meals during that time because I just didn't have time to cook. We were in the hospital many weeks with Austin. About a year after Austin was born, Ann – she had four small kids of her own – was diagnosed with a brain tumor, and we began to pray just diligently for Ann, but it just – it was just a very, very difficult case of cancer. It got worse and worse, and one of the things the doctor asked her to do was to take walks and just kind of help her body aerobically, you know, to get things moving and try to maintain a level of strength. And her oldest little girl was seven-year-old Emily, and so she would take Emily with her because they homeschooled, and she would walk little Emily around, you know, the neighborhood, but most of the time she had to forgo the aerobic benefit because Emily was a lover of flowers, and Emily would see flowers along the way, and she would say, "Mommy, a flower," and she'd stop and pick the flower, and Ann would get down with her, and they'd marvel at God's creation and smell that flower. And three or four months later, very, very quickly, we lost Ann, and she passed away, and Emily was at that service, and I'll never forget that little seven-year-old girl going up to the podium to speak at her mom's service and saying, "I just want people to know that my mommy took time to smell the flowers."

The little precious girl had no idea the message she was giving in just those few words to all the people listening. That's what I want my kids to say about me. All the rest doesn't matter, and it won't matter in heaven. There won't be autograph lines in heaven. But that I took time to smell the flowers with my kids, with my husband, with my loved ones, that's everything. That's how we love. Amen.

[applause]

My little nephew, Jonathan, is Tommy in my series – little Tommy, Luke and Regan's son in my series. He's always getting into trouble. Well, that's my Jonathan, my nephew. He is a crackup. Everything you read about Tommy, Jonathan has done.

[laughter]
Well, everybody came to our house for Christmas this last year, and there were a lot of fun. We had a big present-opening time late at night that night, and Jonathan was the most excited of all, I mean, he had the big racetrack and dinosaurs, and he was just so excited, he was, like, he just turned four and, you know, everything is bigger than life, it was so exciting.

The next morning, I was downstairs, and I was making scrambled eggs for the whole 28 of us or whatever, and he came in, and he said, "Hi, Aunt Karen," and I said, "Hi, Jonathan." I was hoping I’d get another story from him, you know. [laughter]

So he comes and he sits up at the barstool, and he's just still very excited, I could tell, and I said, "So, honey, what was your favorite thing about last night? What was the favorite present you got?" And I was kind of hoping it would be the racetrack we gave him, you know. He said, "My favorite thing was I got to sleep between Mom and Dad last night." [laughter]

And there it was again – there was that reminder. I mean, a year from now, you know, six weeks after Christmas, he's not going to remember what he got. The gifts are going to break and fall apart and be given away to Goodwill, but the fact that he got to spend that time cuddling between his mom and dad, that lasts, that last forever. I'm just grateful that God has shown me, through experiences in my life, that one of the main ways to live a vibrant, joyful life, and to let that mark this chapter in the book of my – story of my life is by putting priority on the people God has placed in our life.

The Book of John mentions the word "life" 33 times. So let's be lively. Let's look for ways to love God and people, the ones He has placed in our life, and let's watch that be the part of our story that we are writing today, but let's also be aware of this truth – in the story of our lives we have an antagonist, the devil, who does not want us to live a vibrant, joyful life. We need to know that. John 10:10 tells us, "The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy." The rest of John 10:10 comes with a promise— the Lord says, "I have come that they may have life and have it to the fullest."

See, whatever the devil sets out to do, it's still our choice about whether we want to have joy and whether we want to embrace the promises of Christ and understand that it's just a blink here, just a blink. That little Kinsey, she'll be graduating like my Kelsey in just a blink. That's how it works. So whatever the devil does, it's temporary. We don't need to get dragged down by it. We can choose to live that vibrant, joyful life. We can live it between Sundays, and we can place that priority on the people that God has placed in our lives.
You know, it's true for us. In one of the books that I wrote recently was called "Just Beyond the Clouds," and it was a sequel to "A Thousands Tomorrows," which was a special book to me about a love story involving cystic fibrosis. But "Just Beyond the Clouds" is about – primarily about two very good friends, a guy and a girl, who have Down syndrome, and how their families are struggling with their wish to want to be more independent. And one of the things that these two have is their special friendship is that Daisy, the girl, she's afraid of rain, she is terrified of rain, and she thinks it's going to melt her.

And Carl Joseph, he has Down syndrome, and he is her friend, and it's his job to come up beside her and put his arm around her when it rains and say, "It's okay, Daisy, it's okay. There's sunshine just beyond the clouds." And that's true. It's true with people with Down syndrome, it's true with those of us who have any sort of disability, anything that's putting a cloud in the way of what the world sees, there's sunshine just beyond the clouds.

Illness taking over your life, that's okay, there's sunshine just beyond the clouds. Debt piled up, estranged relationships, broken hearts – that's okay, there's sunshine just beyond the clouds. You see, for us who love Jesus Christ, the end of our story is already written.

**Bob:** Well, we've been listening again to Part 2 of a message from Karen Kingsbury, and I couldn't help but think, Dennis, the reason that the end of the story is written, and we know the end is because of the season that we're celebrating now, because of the birth of God come in human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.

**Dennis:** Yeah, and aren't you glad He didn't stay a baby, but He became a man, and that a few followers wrote down what He said so we could have those words, those promises from God to us. And I just want to read one that Karen just quoted in her message – John 14, Jesus said, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in Me." There has to be a heart or two who are listening right now who is troubled who – maybe it's because of finances at Christmastime, maybe it's because of health issues, a child, an issue with your spouse, or maybe a single person who is lonely, or a single parent who is going it alone, but your heart is troubled. Jesus comes, and He says, "Believe in God, believe also in Me."

He goes on to say, "In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself that where I am" – this is the great promise here, listen to this, this is the promise of Christmas – "that where I am you may be also."
And, you know, Bob, I think life is one long process of God weaning us from planet earth and putting an increasing longing for heaven. That's what really the message of Christmas is – that you weren't made for here, you were made for Him and there.

And Karen just did a great job of reminding us of what's really important in life.

**Bob:** Yeah, of course, that's what Karen does in her novels as well. And I think that's one of the reasons they have been as popular as they have been. She's sold more than 10 million copies of her novels. She's written more than 30 books, and she's had nine number-one bestsellers. In fact, I think she is the first author to receive the highest award, the "Gold Medallion Book of the Year Award" for a work of fiction. It's always been a work of nonfiction in the past, and she received this past year for a work of fiction.

We have selected a few of her books including the book, "Let's Go On a Mommy Date," that she read from on today's program. You can go to our website, FamilyLifeToday.com and the information is available there about how you can order these books, have them sent out to you. Also, if you'd like to hear Karen's entire message, we've only been able to feature a portion of it this week on our program, but we have the CD that has the complete message available, and you can find that on our website as well, FamilyLifeToday.com or call us at 1-800-FLTODAY, 1-800-358-6329, and someone on our team will make arrangements to have the books that you're interested in, or the CD sent out to you.

You know, I've been thinking over the last several weeks about how this is going to be a very different Christmas season for a lot of families. The current economic situation is a challenge for a number of families, and it has, frankly, been challenging for us here at FamilyLife as well. We've had to make some adjustments in our operating budget. We've had to put some projects on hold and had to postpone some of the things that we're hoping to do in ministry and, frankly, we're continuing to look at places where we may need to cut budget. We want to operate as good stewards of the monies that God has entrusted to us.

And we were very encouraged earlier this month when we heard from some friends who said they wanted to help support our ministry and to encourage other to do the same, so they agreed that they would match every donation that we receive during the month of December on a dollar-for-dollar basis up to a total of $425,000. And we were very humbled by their generosity, and we told them that we would come to you and let you know about this matching gift opportunity and ask you to help support the ministry of FamilyLife Today as well.

So when you make a donation this month, whether it's $25 or $50, $100, $500, whatever you are able to do here at year-end, your donation is going to be matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis up to a total of $425,000. And we hope we can take full advantage of this matching gift. In this economic climate, that may
be tough, but we’re hoping you will help make that possible by doing whatever you can do here at year-end.

You can make your donation online at FamilyLifeToday.com or call 1-800-FLTODAY, make your donation over the phone, and let me just say in advance we appreciate your generosity and your sacrifice and your support of this ministry.

And we hope you can join us back tomorrow as well. We’re going to hear from our friend, Tom Elliff, tomorrow about a very special Christmas tree decoration that was a part of their family’s Christmas celebration every year for many years, and we’ll tell you what that decoration was and tell you the meaning behind that decoration. I hope you can join us.

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 next time 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?

Copyright © FamilyLife. All rights reserved.

www.FamilyLife.com