Bob: Have you ever found yourself in an angry confrontation with a teenage daughter? How did you respond? With anger of your own? Sissy Goff suggests there's a better way.

Sissy: There is a way for your to speak into your child's life where you say "The fact that you said 'I hate you' to me for the first time is not who I believe you are. And let me tell you who I think you are. I saw you act so kindly to your grandmother two days ago. That's you. This is not." And going on and dealing with their sin and giving them consequences because they need that but also calling out the good that you see God bringing to fruition in them.

[musical transition]

This is FamilyLife Today for Thursday, March 5th. Our host is the president of FamilyLife, Dennis Rainey, and I'm Bob Lepine. Today we'll see if we can get a picture of what's going on inside the heart of teenage girls and what we can do as parents to better connect heart-to-heart with our daughters. Stay tuned.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today, thanks for joining us. I don't know that we've ever had any lady bikers on the program before, have we? Is this the first time we've had lady bikers on?

Dennis: Lady bikers?

Bob: Well, yeah.

Dennis: I missed that in the bio.

Bob: You didn't know that? Oh, we've got some serious biker mamas on the program with us today.

Melissa: Without motors, so it's pedaling.

Dennis: Oh, it's not hawgs and Harleys, then?

Sissy: No, it's [inaudible].
Dennis: Oh, okay. Well, Melissa Trevathan joins us, and Sissy Goff. Welcome to FamilyLife Today.

Sissy: Thank you so much for having us.

Dennis: And, again, what kind of bikes are you riding then?

Melissa: We rode 400 miles. We rode the Natchez Trace.

Sissy: In 10 days, and I cried every day. I was the youngest, by far.

Melissa: There were three of us that rode it and raised money for our organization that we work for, and it was a great experience except for Sissy.

Sissy: Except for me crying.

Bob: Why were you crying every day?

Sissy: Well, I pictured – you know, I work with girls, obviously, I am a girl, I think like girls relationally. I was thinking we were going to be riding and laughing and talking and singing, and I never saw either one of them.

Dennis: [laughs]

Sissy: And they were way past me, and our friend in the middle is 10 years older than I am and Melissa, sorry to say this on a radio, is 20 years older than I am, and I never saw them. And so I would just be in the back going [makes sobbing noises] where are they?

Bob: Well, you know, these ladies are going to take you – this is kind of a trip down memory lane, because there was a time when a big part of your life was with 10 and 11-year-olds, right?

Dennis: I’m telling you and, in fact, I was raising only girls. My sons had deserted me and gone on to college, and so it was a minority in a sorority at that point, and I could have used your books. You ladies have written a number of books. You’re involved in Daystar Counseling Ministries in Nashville, and let’s just start with you, Sissy. You believe that young ladies today are asking themselves four questions. In fact, almost all young ladies are wanting answers to these four questions.

Sissy: Yes, absolutely. And the questions are who am I? What do I want? What should I do? And who do I want to be?

Bob: Now, when you say, "Who am I?"
Sissy: Who am I?

Bob: I mean, they know who they are, right?

Sissy: Right, but kind of in just a deeper level God is creating me to be. And I think girls, we talk a lot about with girls and parents about how the thing that girls probably struggle with the most is – self-hatred is a really strong word, but it’s kind of a continuum of just questioning themselves. Girls get angry with themselves, they are so hard on themselves, and so that "Who am I" is kind of "I don't understand all the things going on inside of me and who is God really calling me to be?"

Dennis: And this manifests itself in all kinds of way in young ladies.

Sissy: All kinds of ways, yes.

Dennis: Eating disorders.

Sissy: Absolutely – cutting, which is kind of more of the thing now; drug and alcohol; or just really unhealthy relationships or low self-esteem or depression – I mean, there's a million things.

Melissa: And I think we all feel that in a certain extent – "I know who I am, and I don't like who I am. Something is wrong with me." And there is a healthiness in that – that I am a mess. But, for girls, that is so magnified sometimes where it becomes, "I not only do not like myself, I hate myself, and I want to hurt myself because I am so bad."

Sissy: Well, and a lot of where that's coming from, and one of the things that we talk a lot about in the books is that girls, especially when they're moving in adolescence and hit middle school, they start to have these really deep longings to connect with other people, and we live in a fallen world. And so every relationship – friends, boys, parents, anybody is going to disappoint them. They don't get that. We all know this side of heaven Jesus is the only one who is going to meet every need we have. They really think somebody else is going to, and so their feelings come from that. "I have these deep longings, they're not being met, I don't know what to do with it."

And what girls will say to me in my office a lot of times of why they cut and why they do those other things is "I would rather not feel than hurt this much emotionally. I would rather do something to stop the emotional feeling." And, really, the literal thing they'll say is "I would rather feel hurt physically than hurt emotionally."

Dennis: And the picture we started out laughing about of you on a bike ride …
Sissy: Yes.

Dennis: Being left out?

Sissy: Yes, yeah!

Dennis: And crying?

Sissy: Yes.

Dennis: That really is a humorous story, but it's really at the core what a young lady is all about. She wants to be included, she wants to be a part, she wants the relationships, and when that doesn't happen, it's not simply a matter of pedaling slower and being alone and crying at the end of the line …

Sissy: Right.

Dennis: In this case, it manifests itself through harmful behavior.

Sissy: Right.

Melissa: And there was something that Sissy said on the bike ride a lot that we took was …

Sissy: I don't know if you're supposed to [inaudible].

Melissa: “This isn't what I thought it would be. This isn't the way I thought it would be,” and I think that's what girls – they may not be saying that, but that's what they're feeling and thinking. "This is not the way I thought that my life would be at this age."

Bob: Is this in the heart of a girl when she is seven or eight or nine? I mean, I thinking of these happy-go-lucky, carefree little girls that I see that just look like they're loving life and – or is it something that starts to emerge at the onset of adolescence?

Sissy: We talked about the years from 6 to 10 or 11 being the adventurous years. You know, that’s the age that girls – think of all those movies like "Winn-Dixie" and "My Girl," and I feel like what my picture of girls at that age in my head is little girls with ponytails on bicycles with baskets pedaling as fast as they can through puddles with boys trailing behind them. You know, there's just a freedom and a lack of self-consciousness, but they hit 11, 12, 13, and that self-consciousness just washes over them like a flood, and they don't know what to do with it, and the interesting thing is, and one of the things we talk about in the book is there are even physical reasons that that starts to happen.
Bob: Like what?

Sissy: Like – I don't know if either of you live in an old house. I live in an old house, and sometimes I'll turn on my hairdryer, and my lights in another room will go out.

Bob: Yeah, right.

Sissy: Well, their brains, when they are little-bitty toddlers, their brains are growing really fast – all of brains grew really fast, obviously – and then when they hit elementary school, the brain growth slows down, and they have this kind of dark phase, and then when they hit 10 to 11 or 12, the brain growth takes off again – so much so that it short-circuits itself, and the two things that it affects in girls are memory, which is why they'll say, "I forgot my homework," and they really did forget their homework a lot of times – and confidence. I mean, it's scientifically proven that they have these dips in confidence that are physically caused, but it just contributes to that whole phenomenon of "something's wrong with me."

Dennis: And, of course, it's not only the hormones that are beginning to wash all over the brain of a young lady, but there is a culture.

Sissy: Oh, absolutely.

Dennis: That is feeding all these false images into the lives of these young people, and they have to begin to really question who they are.

Sissy: Yes, yes.

Dennis: What do you think are the most dangerous images young ladies are led to believe about themselves as they emerge through the 'tween years into adolescence?

Sissy: I think so much of it has to do with physical. I mean, the looks. And Melissa tells a story about one of the first girls she counseled that I love.

Melissa: Yeah, she came in, and she said, "If you could do two things for me" – and she was at the point of being in deep depression – "two things for me, one is make me funny and make me skinny," and those were the two things – "And then I'll be okay. If you can help me be funny and help me get skinny."

Bob: Did she see that as her ticket to acceptance?

Melissa: Oh, yes, yes, definitely.
Bob: I want you to go back to when you were 10, 11, 12. Do you remember these feelings that girls are feeling today yourself? Do you remember being a pre-adolescent, a young adolescent, and having this lack of confidence and this sense of "Do I really belong?" and – was this a part of your life?

Melissa: I remember moving into it at a point to where, as Sissy was talking about – the self-consciousness comes where I start to – "How are people seeing me?" And I remember thinking, "If I just didn't want to be liked, if I didn't want people to love me and accept me, I could be okay. I hate that I want to be liked." And I remember hating myself in that way.

Bob: And, Sissy, it's not as far back for you as it is for Melissa and for me …

Melissa: Thank you very much.

Bob: Do you remember this?

Sissy: Absolutely. I remember being very attached to physical, to the way I looked, and I always thought my friends were so much prettier than I was. You know, I mean, I think there is that comparison that happens so often with girls, and, really, I was growing up in the '80s but today – I was reading in "Entertainment Weekly" recently, you know, two of the shows, television shows, girls are watching the most – one of them is "Gossip Girl," and one of them, you know, they have revamped "90210." And what they were talking about is how the girls on "Gossip Girl" are so thin, but "90210" puts those girls to shame, and how it is staggering the amount – they can't even talk about eating disorders on the set of "90210" because they feel like every girl has one.

I mean, if "Entertainment Weekly" is saying that and standing up to the fact that there is a problem going on, I mean, we, especially, as Christians, should be battling that and really come at that from such a different perspective and offer something different.

Dennis: If you were coaching a parent, let's say you've got a mom and, for that matter, a dad who has a daughter or two, and this is right where they are – they are either near the teenage years or they are in it. A teenage daughter or the 'tween is asking, "Who am I?" How would you help them answer the question? Because most parents look at this, and they go, "I'm not sure how to help them answer the question."

Sissy: Well, we, in our book, "Raising Girls," the end of the book, based on this concept of naming girls, which I can't take credit for, but Melissa taught at a summer camp. Part of our counseling ministry, we have individual counseling, group counseling in the camps in the summer, which are amazing, and she does
all the Bible teaching to the kids, and she does these things I never could even get to spiritually, but she …

**Melissa:** That's because I'm older.

**Sissy:** She talked about the verse in Revelation where it talks about when we get to heaven that Jesus is going to give us a stone with our name written on it, and that name is known only to us and Him. And what she said is – we had been with these kids for a week – 25 kids at each camp – and she said, "You know, we don't know each other's names, we’re not going to know each other's names, but based on what we have known of each other in this last week, we can guess."

And so there was a boy – there's a boy that comes to Daystar who, he was probably 15 at the time – his parents – he came to counseling with us because his parents were divorced. Later on, his mom was diagnosed with bipolar depression, his father came out of the closet living a homosexual lifestyle, and a year later his brother was running on a playground at school, in elementary school, and dropped dead. Just a staggering amount for one child to go through.

And so the counselors, our counselors, had gotten together to name this kid, and what they did was they raised their hand and said, "We want to give you the name "Jubilee," because everything that has come before is canceled in light of Christ and His love for you. And that does not have to cling to the identity of who you are.

And so we take that kind of a step further with parents and say, "There is a way for you to speak into your child's life where you say, 'The fact that you just got drunk for the first time, or the fact that you said I hate you to me for the first time is not who I believe you are, and let me tell you who I think you are. I saw you act so kindly to your grandmother two days ago. That's you. This is not."

It's calling out the good that you see God bringing to fruition in them and going on and dealing with the negative, dealing with their sin, and giving them consequences because they need that but also calling out the deeper, better things, because I think kids want both, girls and boys, we want both. We want to be known and loved, really known and really loved.

**Bob:** There are some parents, though, who are hearing you say that, and they go, "Okay, I'm trying to think back to the last good thing that I can say." You know, I can say to my child, "Well, I remember back when you were 12. You did something nice with the cat," you know, but it's been five years, and you've just been angry the whole time and disruptive to our household.

Melissa, what do you do in that kind of a situation as a parent?
Melissa: Well, I think that encouragement can come in so many different ways in what Sissy is talking about, and some of it is just having a sense of playfulness, of enjoying and delighting in your child. Eugene Peterson writes – I can't remember specifically, but he says sometimes we're living with such a sense of survival that we quit enjoying and really have no sense of playfulness. And I think a parent can always choose that in the midst of the relationship.

Dennis: You know, I hadn't thought about it until just as you were both talking about this, but I have pet nicknames for all my daughters. My oldest daughter, her nickname is "Princess," and she always kind of seemed to live up to that. My next daughter was "Joy." And I used to call her "Rebecca Jean Joy Susie-Q Rainey." She just was a lot of fun, had the best giggle. At the dinner table, when she got her gigglebox turned upside down, the whole family would burst out laughing.

Bob: How did you even get that name – Rebecca Jean Joy Susie-Q Rainey?" Because "Jubilee" makes sense to me. I get that one.

Dennis: It has a long family lineage, Bob, let's just leave it at that. Then there was Deborah, who I called "Peanut," and, you know, a couple of years ago I wrote her an e-mail, and I addressed it, and I said, "Dear Peanut," and she wrote me back and said, "I still love it when you refer to me" – and the point is I delight in peanuts, I like peanuts, okay? And then our last daughter, Laura, who I called "Sunshine." In fact, day before yesterday, I wrote her a note, and I said, "Dear Sunshine, Keep lighting up somebody's life, because you really do that." And, you know, you forget how much your words can really mean to your children.

Sissy: Oh, absolutely.

Dennis: And back to Bob's point, there were periods of time with all four of those daughters where it wasn't all "Peanut" and "Sunshine" and "Joy" and "Princess."

Bob: And "Susie-Q." Do you like Susie-Qs, too? Is that why you got that name in there?

Dennis: Well, that was Barbara's father's nickname of her.

Bob: Oh, okay.

Dennis: My wife Barbara, when she was growing up as a little girl, her dad called her "Susie-Q," and I don't know why we decided to stick it with Rebecca Jean Joy Susie-Q Rainey, but we did.

But, to this point, you're helping your daughters find out who they are.

Melissa: Yes.
Sissy: Right.

Dennis: And what you say to them and what you call them is very important.

Sissy: Yes.

Melissa: And who they are becoming, and you see them, and they do respond to that even though they're not going to say, "Oh, Dad, thank you for calling me 'Peanut.'"

Sissy: Right, they probably rolled their eyes when they were 13, but they still loved it, because you said an operative word – you were delighting in them, and I think that's something girls want so desperately.

Dennis: They really do.

Sissy: Yes.

Dennis: Let's move on to this other question – what do I want? Now, what is a young lady asking when she asks the question "What do I want?" Are you talking about out of life? Out of relationships?

Bob: From the mall?

[laughter]

Sissy: They are thinking about that. What we're really talking about there is relationships, you said it. Because it's kind of almost helping them realize what they want, because, again, they tend to think something is wrong with them because they want so much. Like Melissa was saying when she was growing up, if she could just stop making herself want so much then things would be okay, which is what this girl was saying, too. And girls – I have moms telling me all the time that their daughters will start taking extra lunch money to school to buy other kids' lunches – different things like that where they're kind of trying to negotiate how to have better relationships, and they don't really know how yet.

And so that's part of what's happening of "What do I want? I think I want to be close to people, but it doesn't make sense to me. I don't understand."

Bob: Well, and Lot of girls even at a young age have learned that, "Yes, I want relationship, and I want people to be close to me, but there is pain there."

Sissy: Absolutely.
Bob: So they're not really sure that that's what they want, and there's this conflict – I want intimacy, I don't want pain, they seem to go together. How do I make sense of that?

Melissa: I think what you're describing is what we've done since we were very young is that "Come close, get away." And I think it begins at an early age, but I think we, as adults, continue to feel it. I had an 80-year-old woman tell me the other day, "I just don't want to get close to anyone because I'm going to lose them." And whatever kind of loss it is, but it is a very, very normal fear that's there.

But I think girls – when you begin to express – of course, you want to be connected; of course, you want to be close. And that helps them so much that, "Oh, yeah, I do." It's so simple sometimes.

Dennis: What you have to do, and Sissy referred to this earlier – when the voices of their peers become so loud that you feel like, as a parent, you are being drowned out, you must fight through the static and the uproar of all the voices speaking into their lives, and you have to pursue them, you have to find what the currency of their souls are.

Sissy: Exactly.

Dennis: If it's shopping, if it's hiking, if it's going on dates …

Sissy: If it's "American Idol."

Dennis: Well, seriously, I know a dad who has four daughters, and when "American Idol" comes on, he sits down and watches that.

Sissy: Oh, I tell parents to do that with their kids.

Dennis: And he enters into it, he's engaged in it. In fact, he even voted a bunch of times for one of the …

Bob: Which one? David Cook or David Archuleta?

Dennis: It was a year before that.

Sissy: Melinda! It was Melinda Doolittle.

Bob: Oh, these Nashville people, cheered on the hometown favorite.

Dennis: The point we want to give parents here is don't allow peers to push you out of your child's life at a time when they need a relationship with you more than they understand, and you are the key person to help them address these four
questions – who am I? What do I want? What should I do? And Who do I want to be? You are the one who will help them answer those questions – don't back off and back up.

**Bob:** You used the word "pursue." You're really talking about wooing the heart of your child, which, as a parent, you feel like, "Now, wait, I shouldn't have to woo you. I gave birth to you, I'm giving you a bed, and I'm giving you food" ...

**Dennis:** That's the way a parent thinks.

**Bob:** "You owe me your heart," and yet a child gets to be 14, 15, and they don't feel that way, do they?

**Dennis:** They don't. They begin to fly the nest, and, as a parent, you have to open your hands, and if you get clutchy and get preachy and – I would contrast preachy with pursue. You know, we're talking about a relationship here, we're not talking about lectures, and you have to pick your silver bullets very, very carefully when you're raising these young ladies today.

**Bob:** Yeah, and I think you've got to be prepared, too, to understand what's in the heart of your daughter, and that's what the two of you have tried to unpack for us in the book you've written called "All You Need to Know About Raising Girls," which we have in our FamilyLife Resource Center, and I want to encourage our listeners to go to FamilyLifeToday.com to get more information about the book. You can request copies from us.

Once again, the website is FamilyLifeToday.com. You can also call toll-free 1-800-358-6329, that's 1-800-F-as-in-family, L-as-in-life, and then the word TODAY. You can get more information from us when you call about how you can get a copy of the book. Again, it's called "All You Need to Know About Raising Girls." The number again – 1-800-FLTODAY, or go online at FamilyLifeToday.com.

I also want to express our gratitude, say a word of thanks to those of you who help support the ministry of FamilyLife Today by making a regular donation to this ministry. As you know, these are challenging times for families, challenging times for businesses and for ministries like ours, and I know that there are many of you who would love to be able to do more in terms of giving than you are able to do. And we certainly don't want to do anything that puts any pressure on any of our listeners.

But we so much appreciate those of you who are able to stand with us and who either go online at FamilyLifeToday.com and make a donation there, or call 1-800-FLTODAY and make your donation over the phone. We could not continue on this station and on other stations all across the country if it weren't for your financial support. So we really do appreciate your partnership with us.
This month, if you are able to help with a donation of any amount, we want to send you a DVD. This is actually the most viewed movie of all time. It's the story of the life of Jesus, the Jesus film on DVD, and there are a couple of things that make this DVD very unique. One is that it features seven different languages on the audio tracks. So if you know somebody whose first language is Spanish or German or Arabic or Korean or Vietnamese, you can give them this DVD, and they can watch the story with the audio in their own language.

The other thing that's unique about the DVD is that it features the Story of Jesus for Children, a retelling of the life of Jesus from the Scriptures through the eyes of a child. Again, the DVD is our gift to you this month when you make a donation of any amount to support the ministry of FamilyLife Today.

And if you're making that donation online, you want to type the word "JesusDVD" in the keycode box that you find on the donation form or call 1-800-FLTODAY, 1-800-358-6329. You can make a donation over the phone. Just ask for us to send you a copy of the Jesus DVD when you do call to make a donation and, again, we appreciate so much your support of this ministry.

Now, tomorrow we're going to talk more about what we can do as moms and dads to raise our daughters to be godly young women. I hope you can tune in 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 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.

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