Bob: When it came to relationships, Leslie Ludys high school years were typical – unfortunately!

Leslie: I was always asking the question how far is too far? How close can I go? As opposed to the question we should be asking: How far can I go to honor God; to please God; to love my future spouse; to respect that person? If he could see what I was giving to these guys would he be honored?

I made a decision, and I said to God, “Okay I’m not going to give my body, my heart, my mind to another guy until it’s the one that I’m going to marry.” That was a very tough decision because to walk away from all those shallow relationships, and the dating scene, and just wait for God to do something, and serve my life, and live a set apart life for my future husband; it seemed like relational suicide!

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Wednesday, September 9. Our host is the President of FamilyLife Dennis Rainey and I’m Bob Lepine. Straight talk for parents today from Leslie Ludy on how we can raise daughters to embrace biblical womanhood.

Welcome to FamilyLife Today thanks for joining us. If you had to identify what has been the dominant influence in your life on the subject of understanding your own masculinity what’s been primary do you think?

Dennis: That’s a great question! I think it would be a combination of reading the Bible and what the Bible calls men to do. I think secondly seeing the Bible lived out in other men who have been very influential in my life, and I think also my father who really did have the primary influence and it really set me in the right direction. I think for a lot of young people today both male and female: The models that they need at home may not be as strong as what they really need!

Bob: Yes, our understanding of what it means for us to be men and women: We live in an era of cultural confusion on that, and it’s hard for a lot of people to know where do I get the right picture?
Dennis: That’s right, and our guest on today’s program Leslie Ludy actually had an experience when she was a young lady that marked her life in terms of her own femininity, and in terms of who she wanted to be. Leslie, I want you to know I really enjoyed your book *Set Apart Femininity*.

Leslie: Oh thank you!

Dennis: You’ve written other best selling books, you’re a speaker, a musician, a wife, a Mom: is there anything you don’t do?

(laughter)

Leslie: Well, I probably don’t do them all very well, but I do dabble in a lot of things.

Dennis: You have four children under the age of what now?

Leslie: Four: Well, I’m pregnant with number four. So, right now we have three – four and under. It’s very wild at our house most days.

Dennis: She and her husband, Eric, live in Colorado. I want to go back to the beginning of the book. You talk about as a 14-year-old young lady, one of the things you wanted to have the guys do was drool over you!

Leslie: Yes, that’s right!

Dennis: Now, where did you pick up that message as a 14 year old?

Leslie: I think it actually started quite a few years before I was 14. I remember being about 10, and being in my 5th grade elementary school standing by the water fountain; being with a bunch of my girlfriends, and having a bunch of boys surround us by the water fountain. They started just making jokes about which ones of us were sexually attractive, and which ones were developed, and which weren’t.

I was one that was labeled undesirable at the age of 10. I was surrounded by a culture that was constantly pushing this agenda – that you need to have a sexual attitude as a young woman. You need to flaunt your figure and be flirtatious and be seductive and be sensual. By the time I was probably 12, in middle school I just played right into it. I acted the part of being flirtatious and sexual and seductive and encouraged that kind of behavior from guys.

Bob: At 12 years old?

Leslie: Yes, at 12 years old. I just felt like that was the only way to truly be accepted.

Dennis: Did your parents know?
Leslie: I think my parents knew that I was slipping away from the values that they had instilled in me growing up. I don't think they understood what I was truly exposed to because times had changed so dramatically.

I think a lot of their perspective was: Well, she just kind of needs to go through this – it's just part of the growing up process – we don't want to interfere – we don't want to be overprotective. Sometimes parents do need to step in and be overprotective! When we're talking about a culture that pushes sex on girls that are in elementary school, and you know five year olds are wearing bikinis and mini skirts – sometimes parents really do need to be those hero's and step in and say, “No, we don't want you to be around this – we don't want you to be exposed to this.” It's not just part of the growing up process, it's the cultures agenda that we're not going to accept.

Bob: What your parents didn’t know was that on some mornings you were leaving for school wearing baggy sweatpants and a sweatshirt, and as soon as you got out of the house what?

Leslie: Yes, I took the sweats off and I was wearing a halter top and a mini skirt because that was what I had to wear to receive that kind of attention from boys at school. My parents wouldn’t have let me leave the house in that.

Dennis: Your parents had no idea?

Leslie: No!

Dennis: Where were you hiding the clothes?

(Laughter)

Leslie: I don't know – I had some system I'm sure that was very elaborate. When I was about 16 - God really changed my life. I remember going to just a women’s Bible study, and they were asking me to share what I was facing everyday at school. I remember just telling them some of the basics. The first time I was asked to have sex I was 13 years old. A lot of my friends were already sexually active by that time.

Even though I was around Christians and we were going to youth group there was so much going on behind the scenes that our parents didn’t know. I remember telling this to the mom’s at the Bible study that this is reality, and none of them believed me. They thought you’re just exaggerating, my daughter would tell me if she was really facing that kind of thing.

As my husband and I have traveled and spoken, we’ve seen that attitude a lot with parents – sort of like well, I'm sure I would know. I'm sure my child would tell me, or I would pick up on it if they were really facing that. So many young people are living that lie – they’re going to church, they're signing the abstinence commitments and they're living a completely different life.
In my book I talk about a suburb where 50-100 middle school age girls had to be treated by the Health Department for an outbreak of syphilis because they were engaging in these parties where they would be having sex with 50-100 different partners in a six-month period. The Health Department was shocked by this behavior thinking you don’t get syphilis unless you are like a prostitute or something.

Here’s these 12, 13 year old girls, and the shocking thing about it was they went in and interviewed the parents and almost all of these girls were going to church. They were singing their Christian worship songs every Sunday morning, and then that Friday night they were living completely different way, and there were hardly any parents that had a clue what was really going on. So, there really is a disconnect going on between parents and kids.

**Dennis:** I’m picturing Bob, a mom listening to our broadcast right now.

**Bob:** Freaking out listening to our broadcast!

**Dennis:** I want to move to New Zealand!

**Bob:** Yes, I want to move to Iceland because that’s a little more isolated!

**Dennis:** Well they’re just going to wear baggy pants and sweatshirts, then when they get to school they’re going to take them off there, too. You know, I just am picturing mom’s listening and they’re thinking Wow!

What I just want to stop and say to moms as well as dads: listen to me – you do not have to let the culture win. You are the parents, and the teenager is going to make you feel dumb, inept, out of touch, but back to my earlier statement you cannot let them push you out. If there’s anything a teenager needs as they go through these perilous days is they have to have a mom and a dad re-centering them because emotionally and spiritually they don’t have the maturity to make the choices they need to make.

I hate to say this to the mom’s and dad’s because our kids did this too: They’re going to make some stupid choices, but I think what you said that moms and dads need to listen to here – “Let your kids make some shocking statements, and don’t let them see your shock”!

Somehow be a shock absorber as a parent so that your kids can come home, they can bring it home and they’re not afraid of what you’re going to say or do because of how they’re debriefing with you over dinner.

**Bob:** Was this issue of sexual pressure and what’s going on in terms of sexuality – was that the dominant theme that was shaping your understanding of what it means to be a woman?
Leslie: I definitely think so. The cultures message is the way to be feminine is to be sensual, to be seductive. So, every time I was around boys that was the topic of conversation, as you know who’s the most desirable, who’s doing what with who, and really sex was just everywhere. In the Christian circles it was a little more concealed, but it was still going on.

I used to look at purity as the edge of a cliff, and I said, “Okay, as long as I’m technically still a virgin, and I don’t fall off that cliff I can kind of inch my way a little closer – a little closer. It got to the point where I was just dangling on the edge of the cliff, and the rocks were starting to slide out from underneath me. I was still technically pure, and technically a virgin. Unfortunately the message I was getting at youth group and from most Christian influences in my life was that was what really mattered was just the technical part of virginity and that left a lot of gray area.

Dennis: Leslie, you spoke of the edge of the cliff—you have no way of knowing this, but we happen to have a little drama that we’ve put together for Passport to Purity.

Bob: We have created this resource for parents to take pre adolescents through to give them a perspective on the whole issue of what purity ought to look like. The illustration of the cliff is something that we made a story out of, and turned it into a drama that the parents and their children can listen to.

Drama (narrator) “Once upon a time in a domain far, far away a shrewd queen ruled sovereign. The queen loved to be out among her people during times of peace in the kingdom of Ambrose. She would ride on her royal traveling throne – she would wave to children and bounce good wishes upon her subjects as she was carried about on the broad shoulders of the six most honorable knights in the kingdom.

(female voice) Ooo, look at the abs on that one.

(narrator) “During times of war these six were called upon to fight for the rest. In the battle of weeping glen Vincent the Brave left this mortal world protecting a peasant widow from a fiery arrow.

(male voice) “Does this mean I’m dead? Yes, yes, yes! Oh, goodbye! (scream)

(narrator) “After a period of mourning, the queen desired to visit among her people again. It was time to choose Vincent’s successor. (trumpet)

(male voice) Citizens of Ambrose, her royal highness the queen! (cheering)

God save the queen!

(female voice) And may God save you! Knights of Ambrose, I have summoned you here today because I require one of you to serve in my court, to bear me upon my throne, and to advise me in matters of state. Sir Arnold!
(male voice) Yes, my queen?

(female voice) Would you like to serve in my court?

(male voice) Oh yes, your highness – it would please me greatly!

(female voice) Very well – I know you to be strong Sir Arnold: You need only answer this question – if you were carrying my throne around Ambrose cliff where the path is narrow how close to the edge would you go?

(male voice) My lady it is as you say; I’m very strong. I could carry you within one foot of the cliff! (clapping)

(female voice) I see! Sir Jerrod?

(male voice) My queen I am your servant! What say you: How close to the edge of the cliff would you carry my throne?

(male voice) I am as strong as Arnold, but I possess perfect balance. I could carry your throne within six inches of the edge! (clapping)

(male voice) He could not – my queen, my queen I could carry you within three inches of the edge!

(male voice) You could not!

(male voice) I could – I could!

(male voice) Oh, you could not! You big oaf – you could not!

(female voice) Silence!! Sir Connor what would you do?

(male voice) Your highnesses were I granted the honor of carrying you on my shoulders I would go nowhere near the edge of Ambrose cliff. You’ve kept us safe from our enemies, you have fed your kingdom from your storehouses, you have prayed for our peace. Your life is far too precious! I would never put you in danger!

(female voice) Sir Connor the wise will you serve in my court?

(male voice) It would be my honor! (cheering)

Leslie: That’s wonderful (laughter)

Dennis: You know, here’s the thing Leslie. I stumbled on to this whole concept of challenging young people before they face the issue to make up their mind to do what’s
right. I stumbled on to it by teaching a sixth grade Sunday school class for 11 years. So, here I was with 11 and 12 year olds, a few 10 year olds slipped in there a few times, but mostly 11 and 12 year olds.

I found out the same thing you just mentioned here on the broadcast – that they’re being exposed to enormous sexual issues, drinking, drugs, movies, you name it. They need to be challenged to go as far away from the edge of the cliff as possible. They did have the capability of doing that before they face the issue.

Bob: But, here’s what I’m wondering with you – I mean, you were growing up in a Christian home, you had heard biblical values, now the culture’s pulling you in a different direction – was there any tension in your own mind and heart about should I be doing this? Were you consciously making a decision to drift, or was it frog in the kettle kind of stuff for you?

Leslie: I think that’s a great question because I did have a guilty conscience the whole time. This illustration that you just played is so good because it shows that the role of even a true man to protect purity rather than try to conquer purity.

I had no concept of that, because the guys that I was always around were constantly trying to push it as close to the edge of the cliff as possible and conquer a woman’s purity rather than protect it.

The problem was the church in general wasn’t holding that standard up. They were really emphasizing as long as you don’t have sex before marriage, and keeping it sort of muddy – the water’s a little bit muddy. So, I would do things – when I graduated from high school I was still technically a virgin, but I didn’t feel pure. I felt very guilty because I had done about everything you can do up to the point of falling off that cliff, and telling myself the whole time well, I’m still a virgin, I’m still keeping this abstinence commitment. Most of my friends are way past that line already with multiple guys, and here I am.

But, God really began to convict my heart when I was about 16, and I believe strongly that it was my parent’s faithful prayers. That was the one thing that they were extremely strong in – when they didn’t know what else to do they cried out to God for me, and prayed for hours and hours that God would draw me back.

When I was about 16, I remember just crying in my bed in my bedroom, and saying, “God, I’m doing this the Christian way, I haven’t fallen off the cliff, what’s wrong? Why am I miserable?” Over the next few weeks God began to just awaken me saying, “You know this isn’t real purity – you’re not living in real purity – you’re trying to keep yourself away from the edge of the cliff, but you’re not setting your life aside for the person that I have for you.”
I remember reading Proverbs 31. The only reason I was reading it was because I was doing a devotional, and it was Proverbs 31 – the 31st of the month. It said, “The wife of Godly character does her husband good and not harm all the days of her life.”

I stopped on that word all – all the days of her life she does her husband good: Does that mean before she meets him, before she knows him she’s doing him good? I realized wow, I haven’t been living that way for my future husband – I’ve been trying to see how much I could get away with and still stay on God’s good side. I was always asking the question how far is too far? How close can I go?

**Bob:** Which is what every teenager in America is saying: What’s the line? That’s why the cliff illustration makes sense right?

**Leslie:** Exactly – yes where do you draw that line? As opposed to the question we should be asking – how far can I go to honor God, to please God, to love my future spouse, to respect that person? If he could see me, if he could see my thoughts – my emotions, if he could see what I was giving to these guys would he be honored?

That answered a lot of questions for me right there, and I made a decision at that age. I said to God, “Okay I’m not going to give my body, my heart, my mind to another guy until it’s the one that I’m going to marry.”

That was a very tough decision because to walk away from all those shallow relationships, and the dating scene, and the rat race that I was in, and just wait for God to do something, and serve my life and live a set apart life for my future husband – it seemed like relational suicide. For the next couple years there were nights that I cried myself to sleep thinking this was a really bad decision – you know?

There’s no guy out there that’s going to value this – I didn’t see any guys that were interested in protecting purity, or that would honor a decision like that. But God just kept assuring my heart – I have someone for you, and it will be more beautiful than anything you could create for yourself if you trust me. That was really the beginning of a whole new season of my life where I discovered God’s best as opposed to just trying to go the way of the world, and tag a few Christian morals on top.

**Dennis:** You know parents forget how much of a security this whole scene is for teenagers. Even though we used to be a teenager, it’s like we forget what it was like to be a member of the herd!

**Bob:** And how strong the desire for approval, and for affirmation really is.

**Dennis:** Yet, if we could go back, and observe your life undoubtedly there would have been those signals that your parents were observing that you were getting closer and closer to the edge of the cliff. Did they ever confront you about any of your behavior, or any fear that they had? Leslie we’ve taught you, we’ve trained you, we’ve raised you – any expression of that as they raised you through those years?
**Leslie:** I think there definitely were times when they attempted to bridge that gap of communication with me. I was very closed, and you know they had said, “I wasn’t even allowed to date until I was 16.”

A lot of this stuff was going on when I was 12, 13, 14 years old. There were just ways that I was able to sort of get around their scrutiny. I would go with a group of my friends out to a movie theater, but then I’d pair off with a boy, and we’d go in the back of the movie theater or you know at parties that were supposed to be supervised by other parents, and the parents would just sort of disappear.

A lot of things like that where my parents just assumed that things were fine, and that I was doing what I was saying I was doing. I think they were very much at a loss for how to really draw that out of me – really get the reality of what I was doing.

**Dennis:** I think most parents do end up feeling powerless, and the message for parents today is number one: Your relationship with your child really does matter – keep the relationship intact. Whatever you need to do generally speaking let the heart be connected to the heart. Secondly your teaching also matters: All the biblical training; even though they are not listening if it’s in there – if it’s in the heart.

**Bob:** They are listening – they may not act like they’re listening!

**Dennis:** Oh yes – I can tell a story or two here: I won’t! Then third: Persevere and pray - just don’t quit! Hang in there with your child, and hold them up before God who has ways to bring them back that parents don’t have.

**Bob:** I’d just add to that: Cast a vision for your son, for your daughter about what it looks like to live biblically when it comes to this issue of relationships. That’s what you’re trying to do for young ladies in the book: *Set Apart Femininity*. We have copies of the book in our FamilyLife Today resource center.

If our listeners are interested in getting a copy a mom and a daughter could go through this book together – read through a chapter at a time; would spark some great conversation together! Again, go to our FamilyLife Today Resource Center on-line FamilyLifeToday.com or call toll-free, 1-800-FLTODAY, 1-800 F as in “family” L as in “life” and then the word TODAY. Just mention that you are interested in a copy of Leslie’s book, and we’ll make arrangements to get it sent to you.

Then let me also say, “If your daughter’s not yet a teenager, and you’ve not taken her through the *Passport to Purity* material, get more information about that on our web-site as well” – FamilyLifeToday.com. I continue to hear from so many parents who go through *Passport to Purity* with their pre-teen sons, or their pre-teen daughters: It’s just a great weekend for a parent and a child to connect together, and to talk about these issues, and to lay the groundwork for the teen years, and for the issues of relationships.
that are going to pop up during that time. Now, there’s information about those resources and more on-line at FamilyLifeToday.com. Or again, call us at 1-800 F as in “family” L as in “life” and then the word TODAY.

You know, it seems to me that whatever age our children are, this issue of coaching them in the area of relationships is a part of our ongoing responsibility as parents. If they’re pre-teens we’re talking to them about healthy friendships, we may be getting them ready for some of the boy girl kinds of interaction that are going to come later on. If they are teenagers, we’re taking them through the rapids of the teenage years, and talking about relationships then. If they’re young, single adults there are a myriad of issues that come up in relationships for young singles.

Dennis, you and I had a conversation a number of months ago with Chip Ingram who is an author, and a pastor, and a nationally known speaker. We talked with him about the young single culture today, and the mistakes that a lot of young singles are making. That conversation went on for about two hours, and we have two CD’s that feature the extended dialog that we had with Chip. We want to make those CD’s available this week to any of our listeners who can help support the ministry of FamilyLife Today with a donation of any amount.

We’re listener supported, your donations make it possible for us to be on this station and on our network of more than 1,000 stations and outlets all across the country. So, we do appreciate your partnership with us! When you go on-line this week to make a donation, as you are filling out the donation form when you come to the key-code box on the form just type in the word “love” that way we will know to send you the CD’s with Chip Ingram.

Or, call 1-800-FLTODAY. You can make your donation over the phone and ask for the CD’s about relationships that you heard us talking about – again we’re happy to send those out to you. We do appreciate your partnership with us, and your financial support of this ministry.

Tomorrow Leslie Ludy is going to be back with us. We’re going to talk more about what we can do as parents to cast a vision for Biblical womanhood with our daughters. We’ll talk more about that tomorrow – hope you can be with 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 will see you back tomorrow for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

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