Bob: Many couples, perhaps most couples who divorce today are not divorcing because there is no hope left for their marriage. They are divorcing because they just don't know where the hope can be found. Here is Dennis Rainey.

Dennis: Most divorces are not bad marriages, just poorly prepared marriages. So it's very important for a couple who are thinking about spending the rest of your lives together to take the time to adequately prepare and work through the issues that you are going to face.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Wednesday May 12th. Our host is the President of FamilyLife, Dennis Rainey, and I'm Bob Lepine. We are going to talk today about what couples can do during the engagement period so that they can be better prepared for what's coming when they say “I do.”

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us on the Wednesday edition. Hearing you talk about poorly prepared marriages. Can you hear that your voice sounds a little different back then?

Dennis: Yes, I can. Did you have to point that out? I thought you sounded kind of interesting too?

Bob: I guess that happens to the best of us.

Dennis: This was more than a decade ago. This was classic material from the archives of FamilyLife Today and we thought we could share with our listeners because May, June, July and August are all great months for marriages to take place. We thought it was time to just have a plain and simple conversation with the singles who listen our broadcast or the parents who are preparing the young people who will some day soon be married.

Bob: We have had two August weddings among our five children.

Dennis: We had one, blazing hot; I mean it was 105 out.

Bob: Yeah. And what other months did your kids get married in?
Dennis: May and July, and June I think that’s about it. I don’t think we have had one that occurred in the fall or the winter.

Bob: You know I was looking at the numbers and it looks like it’s spread pretty evenly. We always used to think May and June was the time for weeding, but people get married year around. Every month, there is a bunch of folks getting married.

Dennis: Yes, and as they get married, I think there is a need as never before for the biblical blueprints for a couple to start out building their home, off the same set of blueprints, the scriptures. And that’s why we exist here at FamilyLife Today.

Bob: Well, that’s what we’ve got for them today. We are going to take them right to the biblical blueprints. But before we do that, we want to let our regular listeners know about a unique opportunity that they have during the month of May and we are asking them to consider joining with us this month.

We have had some friends who have come to FamilyLife and said, “We would like to put together a matching gift fund.” And they have pledged more than $300,000 toward that fund and they have said, “Now, if you can get FamilyLife Today listeners to donate toward the ministry, we will match those donations dollar for dollar and we will go all the way up to the $300,000 plus that have been pledged toward that fund.”

But in order for us to take advantage of what they have pledged, we need to hear from listeners who will either go online at FamilylifeToday.com or call 1-800-FL-TODAY and say we’re in, we’d like to help. We’ll make a $20 or $50 or $100 donation whatever you are able to do.

Dennis: The reason we are asking you to give is really a couple of reasons. One is the family, in my opinion, has never been under the assault like it is today. I mean there just aren’t a lot of programs whether TV, radio or anything on the internet really helping your marriage, your family go the distance, and we need your help to be able to do this.

And the second reason is we are all about what the Bible has to say about marriage and family. Again, Bob, I think if there is a day when that needs to happen, it’s today because there is a lot of attack on what the scripture has to say about marriage being between a man and a woman for a lifetime.

So if you believe in what we are doing, if you have benefited from FamilyLife Today, we need you to pick up a phone and call 1-800-FL-TODAY or go online to FamilylifeToday.com, and stand with us right now by making a generous contribution.
Bob: That’s 1-800-FL-TODAY and the website is FamilylifeToday.com. And again, let us say thanks in advance for whatever you are able to do. We appreciate your partnership with us.

You talk about marriages and families being under attack. One of the reasons why marriages are under attack is because so few couples really understand the foundation of marriage. They need to be pointed back to the beginning, back to the genesis, back to where marriage first began. And that’s where we want to point them on today’s program.

Dennis: We want to go all the way back to the origins of marriage to the book of Genesis 2. I want to read to our listeners a very basic scripture but one that I don’t think we’ve begun to understand as we need to especially, a young couple who are starting marriage. They need to spend sometime in this passage.

Genesis 2 verses 24 and 25, “For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and they were not ashamed.”

There is a three-fold plan here, leave, cleave, become one. Because if you don’t take the first step right and you don’t do it correctly, you are going to pay when you move to cleave, you are going to pay when it becomes time to become one flesh.

Bob: I remember a statement that Dr. Dan Allender made in his book Intimate Allies. He said that 90% of the problems that he saw in marriage relationships as a counselor, 90% of them could be traced back to a failure to leave.

Dan Allender: In the passage that reflects that we are to become one flesh, there is a sequence that’s required for every man and for every woman. They must leave their family of origin and not just geographically.

In one sense in that culture, they didn’t leave their families geographically, but there is a sense of “I have become a new unit. I have become with my wife a new creation. And now, though we accept the family values, some of the principles and practices of my family. I truly am the new leader, and my wife truly the new helper. We’re to move together uniquely and not under the sway and power of our families of origin.”

That’s not a psychological concept. That was a biblically implanted concept in order to create a new unit.

Dennis: That failure to leave can either be on the couple who are getting married on their part or it can be on the parents’ part.
Bob: A failure to let go?

Dennis: That's exactly right and I think that half of the equation we ignore when we teach this passage. The Hebrew word here which is challenging us to leave means to forsake, it means to lose to leave behind, to release.

Bob: Even individuals, Dennis, who grew up in a difficult situation at home and are thinking to themselves, "I'm going to have no problem leaving because I'm mad at my father and I don't like my mother." There are still a lot of hidden apron strings that they may not even be aware of as they set off in a new marriage relationship.

Dennis: That's right. Those apron strings get longer and you take the past into that marriage. And if there hasn't been a proper leaving behind, it will have an impact on your marriage.

Bob: What would you say are the key issues parents need to be aware of as they head their child toward the aisle?

Dennis: I'm glad you asked me that. I have got a few thoughts on it. First of all, I would encourage any parent to think through what it means for your son or daughter to leave, cleave and become one flesh, especially to let them leave and let them cleave. In fact, to do more than let them, but encourage them and coach them and cheer them on toward the formal leaving and cleaving that occurs during the marriage ceremony.

Bob: Do you remember what Linda Weber did when she invited a daughter-in-law into the family at the rehearsal dinner?

Dennis: Yes, she cut the apron strings to her son and gave them to her daughter-in-law.

Bob: These were literal apron strings.

Dennis: Literal apron strings, and frankly, a little object lesson at that point wouldn't be a bad idea.

Linda Weber: These apron strings I gave you from winding around my heart entwined around my little boy and now they are cut apart. I give them to you Jamie Lynn, Blake's yours to have and hold. I promise there are no strings attached so your love indeed unfolds.

That place of being #1 I pass to you sweet girl although he is special to this mom, his wife now makes life swirl. You know you have got a winner in this champion Blaker. We feel he has chosen of like kind to please our great maker.
We prayed for you this man to take your vows till death do part. Commitment to each other speaks of how you are so smart. Now, when I cut these strings away to replace this cord of love, I wrapped my heart around you both till God calls me from above.

We can't overlook the future. Weber generations yet to come. Those little children announcing gladly mummy, mummy, you are awesome. Jamie Lynn, we do accept you into our big family. May we seek the God of heaven to live each day eternally. I love you, Jamie Lynn, Mom Weber.

(Applause)

**Bob:** Let's turn the tables here, what does it mean for the young people as they look toward leaving?

**Dennis:** Well, first of all, let me tell you what leaving isn't. First of all, it doesn't mean that the relationship is gone forever and you withdraw from them. You have no longer fellowship with them, interact with them.

Secondly, it doesn't mean you are still looking for their approval after you get married. You've got to give up on getting their approval if you didn't get it prior to getting married. Third, it doesn't mean that you allow yourself or your spouse to be manipulated by your parents or by your spouse's parents.

**Bob:** What if a young man sees his future mother-in-law manipulating his bride to be around issues related to the wedding does he step in at this point?

**Dennis:** I think with humility and with a right spirit, he may need to sit down and talk with his future father-in-law and mother-in-law. At this point Bob, it may be best for the young man not to talk to the mother-in-law but to just talk man to man to the father-in-law and to say you know I foresee a problem coming down the pike. I am wondering if my wife is going to be feeling undo pressure after we are married from her mother.

Can you help me out here? Perhaps, ask it in the form of a question and if you they are Christian parents perhaps asking him if he would mind doing some digging in the scriptures around what it means to leave and allow your children to leave?

**Bob:** Alright, you are talking about what leaving isn't, what's another thing that it's not?

**Dennis:** It's not neglecting our parents or dishonoring them by abandoning them. Exodus 20:12 makes it very clear as a part of 10 commandments that we are to honor our mother and father. Certainly all the process of leaving needs to be done within the context of honoring them at all times.
Bob: Okay, well if leaving is none of those things, what is it?

Dennis: It’s severing allegiance upon your parents and establishing allegiance by cleaving and committing to another. It's making a covenant with another person to say no relationship on earth other than my relationship with Jesus Christ and God is more important than my spouse.

(Creative piece)

Minister: Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to celebrate with Mark and Jennifer, the glorious occasion of marriage. Mark, I believe you have written your own vows to Jennifer, would you take Jennifer’s hand now and recite those vows to her?

Mark: I, Mark, take you Jennifer to be my wife in good times and in okay times, in middle class or wealth, and health and maybe when you get a cold. If you iron my shirts, cook me dinner as long as I love you.

Minister: By the powers vested in me, I now pronounce you as committed to your marriage as half the marriages in the United States. (END)

Dennis: That’s a comforting thought, isn’t it? You are as committed as half the marriages taking place in America.

Bob: The truth is most of us at the altar aren’t really committing to the bad stuff that’s coming later.

Dennis: That’s exactly right. Listen to these vows, these came off the internet.

“I, Lori, take you Stan to be my husband in equal love as a mirror for my true SELF. As a partner on my path to love and to cherish in sorrow and joy till death do us part.”

Well, at least they got that right. That’s makes me sick at my stomach frankly I don’t know who Lori and Stan are but bless them. They have missed the whole point of it I fear.

(Creative Piece)

Female Voice: Welcome, welcome all, thank you for joining in this celebration at the ecstasy of love as we place these two dear people beside each other into a love team. Now, as you know Dave and Sue have written their own vows for this love team and in honor of this moment of universal harmony, they have selected spiritual mate names Dave and Sue, wish now and forever to call themselves Unicorn and Moonflower.
Dave: Was I a Moonflower or Unicorn?

Female Voice: Now, Moonflower.

Whispering voice: You can’t remember which one was Moonflower? Sue.”

Sue: Yes.

Female Voice: Will you now woo Unicorn with the chanting of your love wish?

Moonflower: Yes. Oh Unicorn, Unicorn, come to me, my love mate won’t you be, so as long as we shall walk beside.

Unicorn: Moonflower is chanting her love chant. Wow, that’s a heavy dude.

Moonflower: Happy and self-realized won’t you now promise forever to share life’s

Unicorn: What was that one part?

Moonflower: …bloom in our life together?

Unicorn: Does she say forever?

Moonflower: Forever!

Unicorn: I mean she didn’t actually mean like forever.

Moonflower: Forever joined in life for better.

Unicorn: She means like love is forever?

Moonflower: Never more to roam. Unicorn, Unicorn make our love into a home.

Unicorn: Dude a home, you mean like really…

Moonflower: Protect me and defend me as your own and provide for all my wants and needs.

Unicorn: You mean like furniture and dishes and kids and stuff.

Moonflower: Forget about those other flowers even when I dry up and lose my moon power.
**Female Voice:** Unicorn. Unicorn, don’t run away! Unicorn, come back! You are showing your weakness by loving yourself. *(END)*

**Dennis:** You know Bob, we are laughing here but what has happened to the covenant today all across the country in the institution of marriage is no laughing matter.

In fact, I want to take folks back to Matthew 19, these are Jesus Christ’s words here: “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning and made them male and female and said for this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and the two should become one flesh?”

Then Jesus added “Consequently, they are no more two but one flesh. What therefore, God has joined together let no man separate.”

What this is talking about here is a covenant. It’s a solemn pledge to another person, not a contract.

**Bob:** Yeah. A contract is performance based. You do your part and then I will pay you what I agreed to pay. A covenant is not that way.

**Dennis:** No, it is a statement of commitment that goes beyond performance that goes beyond health issues, beyond financial prosperity. It is a commitment to another person to whether the storms of life with another person for a lifetime.

It is a man and a woman pledging to another and making a covenant between them and their God to stay married for a lifetime and to love and care for one another and maintain sexual fidelity towards one another.

*MS* magazine says “marriage is the only war where you sleep with the enemy.” Now, I don’t believe you are sleeping with the enemy but I do believe at times your marriage will be in spiritual war. Have you counted the cost? Do not stand before a pastor and recite some mindless words that may represent traditional vows but words that you have no intention of keeping because your mind has kicked into neutral.

Instead if you use those traditional vows study them. Bring reality to them. Be sobered by them. Realize that you are making these vows in the fear of the Lord before these witnesses. Declare it. Remind one another of it. Pledge your faithfulness to it and be aware of it that this is not tea house, this is your sacred covenant before God and these witnesses.

**Bob:** Well, and like you said most couples are kind of numb when they are actually reciting those words in front of their family and when they have got their nice clothes on and everybody is looking at them. But they really need to stop
before they get to alter and consider what it is they are going to be promising one another and what they are promising one another before God.

That's why we encourage couples as a part of going through the *Preparing for Marriage* workbook to really get these issues out on the table, talk them through understand what it is you are going to be committing to one another when you say “I do.” Over the last, I guess it's been almost 15 years now, we have had tens of thousands of couples who have gone through this material and it's just recently been revised and updated and we want to encourage couples.

This is a great supplement to whatever kind of premarital counseling you are going to be getting from a pastor or from a local church. Get a mentor couple or just the two of you go through this material yourself.

You can go online at FamilyLifeToday.com for information on how to order copies of the *Preparing for Marriage* workbook. Again, it's FamilyLifeToday.com or call 1-800-FL-TODAY, 1-800-358-6329 and we will get you information on how you can get a couple of these workbooks sent out to you if you need more than that because you are going to be involved with a mentor couple, we will take care of that as well. Call 1-800-FL-TODAY or go online at FamilyLifeToday.com.

I think about the tens of thousands of couples who have gone through this material or who have attended a weekend or a marriage conference actually hundreds of thousands of couples who have done that over the years and then the hundreds of thousands of folks who tune into listen to *FamilyLife Today* each day, all of that is made possible because of friends like you who help support this ministry.

We do appreciate those listeners who step forward and say we believe in what you are doing and we want to help support the ministry and make a donation from time to time.

In fact this month when you make a donation to *FamilyLife Today* your donation is going to be doubled. We have had some friends who stepped forward and have offered to match any donation we receive during the month of May on a dollar for dollar basis. They have pledged toward a matching gift fund and the total amount of that fund now is up more than $300,000 so we are doing our part to try to spread the word asking listeners and friends of this ministry to do what they can during the month of May.

Make a $10 or a $20 or a $50 or a $100 or a $500 or a $1000 donation in support of the ministry of *FamilyLife Today*. Whatever you are able to do that donation is going to be matched dollar for dollar as long as those pledges hold out in the matching gift fund so let us hear from you.
If you can go online at FamilyLifeToday.com or call 1-800-FL-TODAY and help support this ministry and let me just say thanks in advance for whatever you are able to do. Again we appreciate your partnership and your support of the ministry.

We hope you will be back with us tomorrow. We are going to continue to talk about the engagement period and tomorrow we want to talk on how you maintain purity during the engagement period and at the same time prepare yourself for sexual intimacy once marriage has arrived. We will talk 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 am Bob Lepine. We will see you back next time for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

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