Bob: Kim Anthony has a lot of painful and hard memories from her childhood, including a night when she remembers seeing her father try to take his own life.

Kim: I heard this commotion, in the bathroom, which was next door and I remember hearing my mother screaming, “No! No! Don’t! You can’t!” He wasn’t screaming but I just heard wrestling. I remember stepping into the doorway and seeing the both of them wrestling in the bathroom, and my father was trying to drink something. I don’t know what it was, but I assumed it was poison, and I remember knowing without a doubt that he was trying to kill himself.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Monday, June 28th. Our host is the President of FamilyLife Dennis Rainey and I’m Bob Lepine. Today, Kim Anthony shares how she overcame unfavorable odds to become a six-time all-American gymnast.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today, thanks for joining us. You know, you’ve said for years and I think it’s been demonstrated not only what we’ve talked about on FamilyLife Today, but just in life—family is powerful for good or for ill; your family marks you for life. But at the same time, family is not necessarily determinative. You can’t point back and say, “Well I can’t” or “I’m not” because of what happened in your family.

Dennis: There are too many great stories of people who have come from, well, families that frankly almost put a sense of evil, a stamp of evil on their lives. They were abused or taken advantage of or came from such a rugged background.

We’re going to hear a great story today, and we got a couple in the studio that I know both you and I are looking forward to chatting with them. Corwin and Kim Anthony join us on FamilyLife Today. Kim, Corwin, welcome to the broadcast.

Corwin: Thank you, we’re glad to be here.

Kim: Thanks for having us.

Dennis: I almost introduced Kim as Kim Hamilton, which is how she was known as the first African-American gymnast to go to scholarship at UCLA, is that right?
**Kim:** That’s right. I was the first female to get that.

**Dennis:** I was looking at your record, and I just got a real rugged question, Kim, right off the bat to ask you. This could be very embarrassing to you…

**Kim:** Uh-oh, I’m scared!

(laughter)

**Dennis:** …but it says here that you were a four-time National Champion and a six-time all-American, and you were inducted into UCLA’s Hall of Fame in October of 2000. I know we all go to school for four years in college…

(laughter)

…is there something you need to share with our listeners about flunking a couple years, so you became an all-American for six years?

**Kim:** Okay. No, I was at UCLA for four years. I finished and got my degree in four years. However, I competed on four events each year, so at nationals, I had the opportunity to get four all-American titles because I competed all-around: vault, bars, beam, and floor.

**Dennis:** Oh! I knew there would be a good answer!

**Kim:** Yes!

**Bob:** So six-time all-American, how many of those were floor and how many of those were beam, I mean what were you?

**Kim:** Oh goodness!

**Bob:** You don’t know?!

**Kim:** I don’t know. It’s really sad. But I did win the national floor title three times, three years in a row, and then I added a vault title to that as well.

**Dennis:** Was that your favorite? The floor?

**Kim:** The floor? Yes it became my favorite because I love to perform.

**Bob:** Wow. Great experience!

**Dennis:** Yes, we didn’t introduce your husband, Corwin, here, and I know…

**Bob:** He’s used to this! Aren’t you used to it?
**Corwin:** Very much so.

(laughter)

**Dennis:** He’s over here smiling! Corwin is a pretty significant athlete in his own right. In fact, both Bob and I are checking out his biceps and comparing our own…

**Bob:** I’m comparing my thighs to his biceps!

**Dennis:** Yes, there you go!

**Bob:** And they’re smaller!

**Dennis:** He was an all Pac 10…

**Bob:** I mean my thighs are smaller his biceps are bigger.

(laughter)

**Dennis:** He was an all Pac 10 tight-end for UCLA in the late eighties. He graduated with a degree in economics. He went on to play in the NFL for the Los Angeles Rams and the New York Jets. He’s worked with Promise Keepers for a number of years, and today he gives leadership to the pro ministries of Athletes in Action, which is a ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ, which we are, too, so he’s a fellow staff member of Campus Crusade for Christ.

Let’s see, Corwin, you have chaplains in about 12 NFL teams across the country, is that right?

**Corwin:** Yes, that’s right, and we have about five full-time chaplains with soccer MLS and a couple of chaplains that serve in the NBA as well as MLB.

**Bob:** And you yourself are chaplain for the ‘mighty’ Miami Dolphins, right?

**Corwin:** Yes that’s right.

**Dennis:** Bob!

(Laughing)

You found a fresh way to insult

**Bob:** No! I’m trying….

**Dennis:** …a guys whose biceps…He can crush you, Bob!
Bob: I was trying to get on the bandwagon! The mighty Miami Dolphins, right?

Dennis: Sure you were!

Bob: This is going to be a great year for the Dolphins, isn’t it?

Corwin: Oh yes, definitely!

Bob: There we go! See?

(laughter)

Dennis: Well, and we got to say that Kim is the wives’ chaplain for the Dolphins as well, so you guys work as a team with pro athletes.

We started the broadcast with Bob making a statement about how the families we come from can be incredibly powerful, but they’re not necessarily determinative. In other words, if we come from a good family, that doesn’t guarantee that we’re going to necessarily follow the Savior and be good.

On the other hand, if we come from a tough family that, too, doesn’t mean that our future is locked in either. I want to take just a paragraph out of your book that you’ve written, Kim. It’s entitled *Unfavorable Odds*, and I just want to read this to our listeners because I want to give them a picture of how you started life. You write:

“I was destined for a rough life, even before I was born. It was 1967. My mother was just a teenager when she became pregnant with me. We lived in a poor area of Richmond, Virginia. Three generations shared two bedrooms in a four-room house on South Lombardi Street. Up to 13 people lived there at any given time.

“The bathroom was an outhouse located in the remote end of the backyard. When the family needed water, they had to draw it from an outdoor spigot, and carry it inside. They bathed once a week in a tub in the middle of the kitchen floor. To say it was rustic would be a considerable understatement.”

Your mom, she’s a survivor!

Kim: She is.

Dennis: I mean, she didn’t start life with a stellar beginning, and she didn’t bring you into life with the best of starts either.

Kim: She did not. However, she instilled in me that God had a plan for me.

Bob: Well, her pregnancy…you said she got pregnant in 1967?
Kim: Yes.

Bob: So this is five years before Roe vs. Wade, but there were people having abortions in 1967. She’s a teenager, single parent…was that on her mind?

Kim: Well, actually, when she went home and shared with her mother that she had become pregnant, her mother, my grandmother, actually encouraged her to abort me. They couldn’t afford to go to a doctor, so basically, she told her what she needed to do in order to abort me, and my mother attempted because she thought that these words from her mother was the only thing to do. She attempted several times and nothing happened.

Dennis: And your mom concluded from that?

Kim: She concluded that she wanted to keep the baby and when my grandmother found out that none of it worked then she said, “You know what? Maybe God didn’t want it to work.”

Dennis: Tell me about your dad. Did your mom and your dad ever marry at that point?

Kim: Yes, actually I think it was a few months after I was born they decided to get married. My father joined the Army and went overseas. So we went to Germany and while my father was there he experienced some very difficult times with racism in the Army.

As a result of the devastation that he went through watching his friends be killed and things like that he ended up getting involved in drugs to quell the pain, to help him to deal with the nightmares that he had been experiencing. So once we moved back to the States he continued the drug usage and he was often out of work and unemployed.

Bob: What do you remember about him as a little girl? I mean, here you are in Germany with your dad in the military, and then you come home. What are your earliest memories? How did you look at your dad?

Kim: Gosh, when you ask me that question, I immediately wanted to think of something happy. But I can’t. What I remember as a youngster with my father is just him wanting me to be perfect, wanting my mother to be perfect, and us never really being able to please him.

He yelled a lot. I wish that I could forget. I’ve tried to stuff down the emotions, the memories, but I knew after a while that God couldn’t bring healing to my life until He brought those emotions to the surface and actually had me deal with them.

Bob: Was your father physically violent with your mom?
Kim: He had been physically violent, yes, and that’s difficult for me to talk about. It wasn’t often, but yes, it happened.

Bob: And did she ever think, “I got to get out of here! I got to get safe!”?

Kim: She did not leave because she wanted for me to have a two parent household. She wanted me to grow up with a father, and there were so many people in that environment and in our neighborhood who didn’t even know who their daddies were. She wanted to have something better for me and because of her desire, as a Christian woman, she thought that the right thing to do was to stay with him, and she did.

Bob: There was word on the street though that he had other women.

Kim: Yes, that was definitely the case. That was a reason why they got divorced when I was about nine years old. They got remarried after some time because he said he had given up the other women and that he was ready to settle down and be a family man again. But after that newness wore off it became the same old heartache again and he got back into his involvement with other women and he even had another family that I didn’t find out about until I was about 28 or 29.

Bob: Wow.

Dennis: Your dad actually came to a point where he despaired so much that he tried to take his own life?

Kim: Yes, he did. He felt that he couldn’t handle it anymore. At that time we all slept in the same bed in a one bedroom apartment and I remember sitting on my mother’s bed and I heard this commotion in the bathroom next door and I remember hearing my mother screaming, “No! No! Don’t! You can’t!”

He wasn’t screaming but I just heard wrestling and I remember stepping into the doorway and seeing the both of them wrestling in the bathroom, and my father was trying to drink something. I don’t know what it was, but I assumed it was poison because she was trying to keep him from drinking it.

I remember knowing without a doubt that he was trying to kill himself. But the only emotion I felt at the time was sadness for my mother because I knew the pain that she was going through constantly. And I hate to even say this out loud, even though I wrote it in the book, but my thought was I hope that he does so that way we don’t have to be scared anymore when he comes home and maybe things will be better for us.

Bob: You wound up eventually going to UCLA on a gymnastic scholarship.

Kim: Yes.
Bob: Did you not see your dad for decades?

Kim: Well, I've always seen him at least every four or five years. When I was at UCLA he would come to my gymnastics meets as far as nationals. He would come every year and even when he was there it was bittersweet because we still had the abusive language or tone. We still couldn't quite get it right for him.

So in between my competition days I would spend time with my mother and my father. I would be miserable and sad because of the things that he would say to my mother, and I felt unworthy. I believe that he didn't mean to do those things, but that he was just dealing with so many issues of his own life that had gone unresolved, and he was taking it out on us, really.

Dennis: When Bob mentioned that you went to UCLA on scholarship I looked at your face and you immediately just brightened.

(laughing)

Was that an escape of sorts?

Kim: It really was. I guess when I look back now on the fact that I was able to get out of Richmond, Virginia and go all the way across the country to UCLA it was definitely a means of escape. It is where I found the Lord. Not that He was hiding but it was where I was introduced to a personal relationship with God and so UCLA has very fond memories. I have very fond memories.

Bob: You and your husband, Corwin, met at UCLA. You eventually were married, and Corwin, it was not long after the two of you were married that you said to your young wife, “Your father is having an impact on our marriage.”

Corwin: Yes. I had just got done playing football, and—well football got done with me, I should say.

(laughing)

Dennis: We’re speaking out of the NFL?

Corwin: I’m sorry. Yes, the NFL. It had been about six or seven months trying to figure out what I was going to do with my life. It was during that period that our marriage began to experience some new challenges and new difficulties and I began to recognize it.

Kim was starting to resent me a little bit, starting to not trust me as much, became more worried about me because I was out of work and didn’t have direction. I realized that she was placing me at the same place as her father, because her father was quite often
out of work and didn’t really have a lot of direction in life. So that was one of the reasons I made that comment to her, and her response was…

Kim: Yes, I thought, “What do you mean my father and my relationship with my father is having an effect on our marriage? I don’t even have a relationship with him!” Corwin just looked at me and said, “Yes, you’re right.”

That was when I began to think seriously about the relationship, and I will say it happened that I was listening to FamilyLife Today, believe it or not, when you all were talking about how to honor your parents, even if your parents have not done the honorable thing. I took the challenge that you both put out and I wrote a letter to my father.

I wrote down 10 positive things that he had done in my life. And honestly, it took me a while to figure those 10 things out but I came up with 10 things and I mailed it to him. I let him know that I loved him and thank you for these things that you’ve done in my life. I asked him a little bit about what had happened in our past, and I said, “I need you in my life and I want you in my life.”

From that letter he wrote a letter back to me. And I remember not opening it immediately because I had never gotten a letter from him before. When I saw his initials in the return address I just sat there and looked at it for probably a day before I opened it. When I opened it up he had written that he didn’t quite understand why he did the things he did but that he loved me and I was blown away. I still have that letter on my desk today.

Dennis: How many times have you read that letter?

Kim: Gosh, I don’t know, countless times!

Bob: And we should say that wasn’t the immediate fix for your relationship with your dad?

Kim: No, it wasn’t.

Bob: Things didn’t turn perfect from then on, but you’ve seen God at work in the midst of the last 18 years in your relationship with him?

Kim: Yes, I have. It was 2008 when I was finishing up the book. I was having a quiet time and I really sensed that God was telling me that I needed to reconcile with my father. I thought, “Lord, I don’t know how to do this!” So I said, “If you want this reconciliation to happen, please do it for me, because I don’t know what else I can do.”

So I spent probably six or seven months just praying and asking God to help me, and during that process, I went from wanting to talk to my father and have him own up and
explain why he did everything he did, to just wanting to talk to him and say, “I love you and I need you.”

God did a work in me in those several months and I was able to get together with him at the end of the year during Thanksgiving weekend. We talked in a restaurant and I shared with him how some of things that he had done when I was little and as I’ve been growing up had affected me as a child and has also had an effect in my adult years.

I also shared with him that now I get an opportunity to go around and I speak in prisons and at women’s events and churches and I share what God has done in my life to bring me from that little girl from Kerry Street who had big dreams but no hope to a woman who now has purpose in life. And I said, “Daddy, I don’t share my story to embarrass you, but I share it because God has done a wonderful work, and when people hear it, they relate to it, and they are touched and they are encouraged by it.

I asked him how he felt about me sharing this story, and especially in book form, and I was honestly ready to have him just read me up and down and be angry. He just looked at me and he apologized for everything he had done. He said, “I still don’t know why I did those things, but I am so sorry.” He told me that he is happy that I’m sharing my story, our story, because it’s helping people. Then he said, “I love you and I’m proud of you.”

I let him know that, “You know what, Daddy? If I had to do it all over again, and God gave me the opportunity to choose who my father could be, I would choose you all over again because I am who I am because of you and because of God’s grace.”

**Dennis:** Whatever your parents have done wrong, however they disappointed you, forgive them.

**Kim:** Yes.

**Dennis:** I’m not trying to be trite, but why stay imprisoned? Be set free. Find a way to forgive them and do what Kim did, which is honor them.

**Kim:** Yes.

**Dennis:** Powerful. *Really,* really, powerful.

**Bob:** And, you know, she reflected back on those broadcasts from years ago. You wrote a book which is called *The Best Gift You Could Ever Give Your Parents* that talks about working through all that you had to work through, Kim, working through the emotions and the challenges of the past to come to a place where you *can* honor your parents.

Now, you can go online at FamilyLifeToday.com for more information about Dennis’ book, *The Best Gift You Could Ever Give Your Parents*. There’s also information about
Kim’s book, which is called *Unfavorable Odds*. It’s a great story. A powerful story of God’s redeeming work in a young girl’s life.

And again, you can get information online at FamilyLifeToday.com, or call, toll-free, 1-800-FL-TODAY, for more information about either of these books. 1-800 F as in “family” L as in “life” and then the word TODAY.

I know for some families there are expenses that crop up in the summer time that are unusual expenses that can throw the family budget out of whack. They may be non-seasonal expenses, but I know there are some things that are unique to summer, whether it’s swimming lessons or if the kids go to camp, things like that that just put a little extra strain on the family budget. Well, we’d like to provide some help.

We came across a book called *99 Ways to Stretch Your Home Budget*. Just good, practical ideas on how you might be able to trim things a little bit so there’s a little extra money available for the family. We’d love to send this copy of a book to you as a kind of get-acquainted book.

If you’re new to FamilyLife, maybe you’ve not been to our website, FamilyLifeToday.com, maybe you’re not a regular listener to *FamilyLife Today*. We’d love to introduce ourselves and send you a copy of this book as a helpful resource and to let you know more about all that FamilyLife has to offer.

So, if you’d like a copy, all you have to do is call 1-800-FL-TODAY, say, “I heard you talking about that book about stretching your budget on the radio, and I’d like to get a copy,” and we’ll be happy to send it out to you.

Again, our toll free number is 1-800-358-6329, 1-800 F as in “family” L as in “life” and then the word TODAY. Give us a call if you’re interested in the copy of the book, and again, if you’re a new listener to *FamilyLife Today*, if you’ve never been on our website, FamilyLifeToday.com, stop by and find out more about the ministry. We’d love to get to know you.

I hope you can be back with us tomorrow. We’re going to continue to hear more from Kim and Corwin Anthony. In fact, tomorrow, we’re going to talk about how a young girl from the projects in Virginia winds up at UCLA as a gymnastics all-American. I hope you can be here 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 will see you back next time for another edition of *FamilyLife Today*.

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