The Challenge of Adolescence

Guest: Dennis Rainey
From the series: Approaching Adolescence: What Your Preteen Needs to Know (Day 1 of 5)
Air date: May 20, 2013

Bob: Do you have a child who is headed into adolescence? Dennis Rainey says that child is headed into a mine field.

Dennis: It is not a matter of if your boy or, for that matter, if your daughter will see pornography, it’s a matter of how much. It’s a question of whether it will become an addiction. Some of these 11- and 12-year-olds, that look so immature—so innocent—have already begun sexual experimentation with the opposite sex and, because of the culture, the same sex.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Monday, May 20th. Our host is the President of FamilyLife®, Dennis Rainey, and I’m Bob Lepine. What can you do, as a mom or a dad, to make sure your children are ready for what’s ahead? We’re going to talk about that today. Stay tuned.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us on the Monday edition. I tell you, I just smile as I was thinking about the message we’re going to feature today on FamilyLife Today because this is a message you shared recently with a number of moms and dads—who are a little younger than you—who have got kids who are at least—

Dennis: A lot younger than my kids now! [Laughter]

Bob: —a decade or more younger than your kids, I guess.

Dennis: Yes.

Bob: I guess, a long way back, you were really with these young moms and dads—trying to get them ready for what’s ahead for them.

Dennis: I want to let our listeners in on what, until right now, is a secret; but you are going to listen to something that I’m going to predict. I’m going to predict that you are about to see a movement started, not because of my message, but because of the heroism of one principal at one Christian school, here in the state of Arkansas. It’s Little
Rock Christian Academy, which is the largest Christian school in the state—arguably, one of the finest schools of any kind in the state.

Bob, you served on the board of that school for a number of years. Your children went there.

Bob: Right.

Dennis: And here’s what happened. Dr. Gary Arnold and I were having lunch together, and Gary is the head of the school. He oversees the high school, the junior high, and the elementary classes of the entire school, over—what Bob?

Bob: 1,300 students.

Dennis: Yes, big school. And we were having lunch. We were just talking about sixth graders, and what they’re facing today, and what he’s seeing sixth graders at his school facing. I said, “You know, Gary, I’ve often wondered what would happen if a school, a Christian school, decided to take everybody in the sixth-grade class through Passport2Purity®.”

Now, Passport2Purity is a Friday night/Saturday experience where a mother takes her daughter, or a father takes his son, and gets away for just a great experience; but they go through a series of CD’s that walk them through issues of peer pressure, of dating, of relating to the opposite sex—

Bob: The birds and the bees are in there, as well.

Dennis: No doubt about that!

Bob: That’s right.

Dennis: And I said, “I just wonder what would happen if every mom and dad in the school—of an 11- or 12-year-old in the sixth grade—would take their son or their daughter through Passport2Purity during their sixth-grade year.” I thought, “What would happen to that class?”

A few weeks later, he calls me back. He goes: “Dennis, I want to do that. I want our school to be the first school to take all 144 of our sixth-graders through Passport2Purity. I want to empower the parents to take them through it.”

Bob: Yes, this is not the teachers getting out the CD’s and taking the kids through this material?

Dennis: Oh, no. No. This is where the rubber meets the road, right here.
Bob: Moms and dads getting away to do this. This is homework for the parents that they didn’t know they were going to get when they signed their kids up for sixth grade.

Dennis: Yes. So, he calls this meeting. He says, “Would you speak?” I said, “I would be honored to speak.” He said, “Well, we’re going to have a meeting of all the parents of the sixth-graders in the school.” So, he did; and I did.

Bob: And when you got together with these moms and dads, you knew that, for a lot of them—especially, if it’s the first time through this stage of life, they’re not fully-prepared for what’s ahead for their kids.

Dennis: No. In fact, you’re going to hear, in my message, that I think most parents really are pretty clueless about what’s coming at their kids—at younger and younger ages—the messages—so aggressively, on our younger people today. And the messages are not minor messages. These are life-altering messages.

Bob: Well, this week, we’re going to get a chance to hear what you shared with those parents—those moms and dads of sixth-graders—as you challenged them to get actively-engaged in the lives of their sons and daughters, prior to adolescence. Then, we’ll spend some time hearing some questions and answers that they had for you before it was all over. Here is Part One of the message that Dennis Rainey shared with those parents of sixth-graders.

[Recorded Message]

Dennis: In 1985, I sat down with 12 sixth-graders and started teaching a sixth-grade Sunday school class. Barbara and I started teaching that and taught it for the next 11 years. At the end, we had over 550 young people that came through that class.

Now, here’s my mistake. I thought that the class was about me educating them. When I started teaching, I arrogantly thought that I, as a dad, had some things I could teach them. Well, I did have a few things to say to them, as young people; but I have to tell you, that teaching that class remains one of the greatest privileges of my life.

The first thing they taught me was 11- and 12-year-olds look innocent; but they know and they have experienced much more than any of us dare to imagine. I was shocked, year after year, at the level the culture, and their friends, and their peers, and other families had influenced them.

The other thing they taught me was how important this 11- and 12-year-old time frame process is because it really provides us, as parents, with a window of opportunity that is unparalleled, I think, in parenting. It’s right as they’re coming out of boyhood and being a little girl. They’re transitioning into becoming a man and a lady—a woman. As parents, if we capture this window, we have one of the greatest opportunities to drive a truckload of truth out of this Book into your kids’ lives; but you have to seize the day.
Third thing these kids taught me was that we, as parents, are not proactively tackling the tough issues that these young people are facing, from a biblical perspective. Moms and dads, there is a reason why our young people are graduating from high school and the youth group and they’re not darkening the church-goers. This Book has not been seen as relevant to the issues they are facing; and I think that all roads lead back home. It’s incumbent upon you and me, as parents, to take the teachings of this Book and to connect the issues they’re facing and help them begin to deal with them.

Some of you know that I have written a book called Interviewing Your Daughter’s Date. Now, I happen to believe that parents were put on earth, by God, to invade the darkness that wants to envelop our young people. One of the greatest opportunities I had—as my kids came up and through the sixth grade, and on into adolescence, was—and they knew it was coming. I told them it would happen. I told them it would happen when they were little—six, seven, eight, nine, ten—when they thought, “Oh, that’s a good idea, Daddy, for you to interview my date!”

So, when they became 16, I interviewed a guy who wanted to take my daughter, Ashley, out. We went outside, and he leaned up against his motorbike. I clarified what he was going to take my daughter out in, at that point. I began to talk with him straight about how men and women are made and how God, in this Book, designed us to be attracted to each other. I talked to him straight about how guys and girls like each other. I said, “You probably noticed that my daughter is cute.” He said, “Yes, sir.” What else could he say; right? I said, “You’ve also probably noticed that she’s got a pretty good figure.” Well, at this point, how does he handle that? If he admits that, then, he’s admitting something to the daddy here—that’s like, “Oh no! I’m found guilty here.” I said: “You know, that’s the way God made us. He made us to be attracted.”

I said: “I want you to understand something, as a father to a young man. You’re going to take my daughter out—maybe one time, maybe 50 times. Perhaps, she would become your wife. You and I both know that’s not likely. [Laughter] So, I’m just going to ask you to keep your lips and your hands off my daughter.” I said: “I’ve done research because of my work that I’m in. I know that boys, your age, think about sex every seven seconds. You and I both know they were lying about the other six seconds.”

I just want to tell you, as parents, we’ve got to dive into the issues are kids are facing because they need us, in the teenager years, more than ever. What you’re going to go through in Passport2Purity is going to be some of the beginning steps—or some additional steps because you’ve already been involved—but you’re going to have conversations around life issues. If you can talk about what you talk about in Passport2Purity, you can talk about anything with your son or your daughter as they mature on in through adolescence.
One last thing they taught me—we, as parents, are not challenging our children to a high enough standard. We are not preparing them for battle. I’m going to read you something, here—that talks about children. It’s Psalm 127:3-4. It says: “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord. The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the children of one’s youth.”

Well, I happen to have, here, an arrow like they used to make. This is a genuine, Indian arrow. It’s got a fletching of turkey feathers. It’s got a flint head to it—the tip of the arrow. It has rawhide to latch it on. You can look down this arrow—and I’ve got several of them—it’s not very straight. So, they don’t always fly straight when you let them go; but arrows weren’t designed, by God, to be left in the quiver. They were designed, by God, for you to pull them back in a bow, and aim them toward a target, and let go. They were designed for battle. They were designed to have impact.

What your assignment is, is to take the bent of your child—and some of them are little more crooked than others it seems—and the issues you’re facing, the winds of the culture, the obstacles—and you’re to think about where you’re aiming your child and how you prepare them for the day of battle that they are going to face. I think what you’re about to do with Passport2Purity is going to be one of the best steps you’ve ever made with your child.

They have a growing taste for adult desires, but they are not emotionally or spiritually prepared for what they’re going to face. You, as parents—Barbara and I, as parents—have the privilege of taking these young people and preparing them for the battles they’re going to face.

I don’t want to spend a long time on this because you already know what’s taking place in our culture; but just a quick rundown of some of the things they are facing. Because we are the screen generation—these little mobile screens—most boys, by the time they’re in the sixth grade, have already seen porn. You may say, “Not my little boy!”

I get to interview folks for our daily radio program, FamilyLife Today. I’m going to tell you, the number of men who have ministries around pornography today because of an addiction that started when they were a little boy—and they pulled their dad’s porn out of his pick-up or they got into a stash at a friend’s house in their closet and that spun them off into an addiction. If that was true 20, 30 years ago—because of the screen generation we’re in—it is not a matter of if your boy or, for that matter, if your daughter will see pornography—it’s a matter of how much, and it’s a matter of what they do with it after they see it, and it’s a question of whether it will become an addiction.

Some of these 11- and 12-year-olds, that look so immature—so innocent—have already begun sexual experimentation with the opposite sex and, because of the culture, the same sex. When we were raising our kids, 99.9 percent of what we had to face was that of opposite-sex attraction—but because of how the culture is treating it and the messages that are blaring at these young people, they’re being encouraged—they’re
being encouraged—to experiment. There’s sexting. There’s bullying. There’s stalking. Girls are preying on boys. I didn’t say they were praying for boys; they are sexually-preying on boys, at younger and younger ages. This is a tough culture we’re raising kids in, and we have to take these issues head-on.

I want to play an audio clip we made for our radio broadcast with a boy named Caleb, 12 years old. Caleb had just gotten back from a Passport2Purity weekend with his dad, Jim. I want you to just listen to this little boy—who, just the weekend before—he’s not even into puberty yet; okay? He comes back home; and within four days, this is what happens.

**Dennis:** Caleb?

**Caleb:** Yes.

**Dennis:** This is Mr. Rainey. How are you doing?

**Caleb:** I’m doing good.

**Dennis:** Thanks for talking to me today. I’ve got a friend here with me, Mr. Lepine.

**Caleb:** Hi, Mr. Lepine.

**Bob:** Hey, Caleb. How you doing?

**Caleb:** I’m doing good.

**Bob:** Good.

**Dennis:** Hey, tell me—it’s my understanding that you were on your way home from school, and something happened.

**Caleb:** Yes, I was hanging outside with my friends. My friend, that was my neighbor—his little sister came out. She had all of her friends there. They’re a couple of grades older than me. I think, maybe about eighth grade; and I’m only in fifth. They came over. They started horsing around my yard. They came over and asked me if I wanted to have sex and everything. I was like, “No—not really.”

**Bob:** Now, wait. You’re telling me these girls came and asked you if you wanted to have sex?

**Caleb:** Yes, sir.

**Dennis:** You’re 11 years old or 12?
Caleb: I'm 11.

Bob: And so, you said?

Caleb: I said, “I'm 11 years old. I'm not married, and I'm not going to do this yet.”

Dennis: You know what? Way to go!

Bob: Good for you!

Dennis: Way to go!

Bob: That's a good answer right there.

Dennis: That's a great answer!

Bob: Just to say: “No. I'm not—no. I'm not married. I'm not going to do that.” So, what did they say when you said that?

Caleb: They just walked away and everything. I could hear them laughing, and giggling, and everything. I was like: “Okay, guys, could you just leave? I just want to hang out with my friends in my front yard. I don't want to have you guys over here asking me to do that. I just wanted to be out here playing basketball.” They kind of went back inside. Then, about five minutes later, they came back out.

Bob: And what did they do when they came back out?

Caleb: They grinded me.

Bob: Explain what you mean.

Caleb: They came up—one of them is on either side of me—and they start rubbing up against me and everything.

Dennis: This is after you had told them you didn't want to have anything to do with—

Caleb: Yes.

Dennis: —with them?

Caleb: And they're like, “Oh, this…” and everything. I'm like, “I'm 11 years old. I don't need people”—

Bob: Wow!
Caleb: —“doing this to me.”

Dennis: I want you to know, as a dad, Caleb, I’m really sorry that that happened; but I’m really proud of you, as a young man, for standing for what’s right—standing firm and for keeping your head in the midst of all that.

Caleb: Thanks.

Bob: Caleb, we appreciate you taking some time for the phone call, and thanks for standing strong.

Caleb: Yes, no problem.

Dennis: Yes, I agree, Caleb. You’re the man! Thank you.

Caleb: Thanks.

Dennis: Bye-bye.

Caleb: Bye.

Dennis: Caleb lives right here—right here in Little Rock, the buckle of the Bible belt. Stakes are high.

One last illustration is a story of Kacie Woody. Some of you may recall this; but as a seven-year-old little girl, she was driving back from a football game with her mom and dad, up near Greenbrier. A horse ran across the road, slamming into their car, killing her mother instantly.

Her dad, who was a police officer with the sheriff’s department in Greenbrier, instantly became a single parent—did what he could do. When he came home from work at Greenbrier, when Kacie was 13 years old, and found that she was not home, at 10:30 at night, he immediately called the authorities—an all-out search was made for her. Twenty hours later, they found her body, in Conway, in a storage shed. She had been shot in the head and assaulted. Sexual predators are real.

Well, as you look at your young people, they are about to exit what Barbara and I call the Golden Years. They are about to send you off into the most challenging years of your life—the teenage years. I’ve done a lot of things in my life, and I want you to know the teenage years were a tremendous payoff. I loved having teenagers. We had four teenagers, at one time—six children total. Nothing challenged me in leadership—as remaining connected, and being engaged, and involved in our teenagers’ lives—as they went through this period.
Here’s the question: Are you going to go on the offensive, or are you going to play defense?

[Studio]

**Bob:** Well, we’ve been listening to the first part of a message that Dennis Rainey shared with parents of sixth-graders, recently—challenging them to get ready for what is ahead—and not just to get ready as parents, but to interact with their sons and daughters about what’s ahead—get them ready for what’s ahead. That’s what we’re trying to do with the resource we’ve created called *Passport2Purity*.

**Dennis:** This is an opportunity to be proactive—to go on the offense—and literally, prepare your son or daughter for the most challenging—I think, among the most challenging, if not the most challenging years of your son or daughter’s life—and to have a good time doing it.

It’s called *Passport2Purity* because it’s a mom taking her daughter or a father, his son, and helping him graduate to the next level—a new level of maturity. Instead of playing defense, you give your young son / your young daughter an opportunity to play offense because they know where they’re headed. They know what’s at stake, and they’ve been trained to handle it.

**Bob:** Well, and there are single parents who have stepped in, as well, and been able to engage with sons or daughters—even we’ve heard from moms who have taken their sons on a *Passport2Purity* weekend—dads who have taken their daughters out on a weekend like this—because they knew that this kind of interaction needed to happen. For whatever reason, they were the ones who had the responsibility to try to point their sons and daughters in the right direction.

I want to encourage listeners—if you have a son or daughter who is 10, 11, 12 years old—13—you’ve never had a weekend like this, you’ve never gone away and talked about what is ahead during adolescence—prepared your children for dating, peer pressure, for the whole issue of sexuality—maybe, you’ve never had the birds-and-the-bees conversation—that’s what *Passport2Purity* is for—to help you have these kinds of conversations with your son or your daughter. If you have had the conversations, this weekend away helps you revisit those earlier discussions and makes sure that your son or daughter understands what the Bible has to say about these areas of life.

Go to our website, FamilyLifeToday.com, for more information on the all-new *Passport2Purity*. It was completely redesigned and rerecorded last year. We’re getting a lot of great feedback from folks. We would love to see you spend a weekend this summer with your son or daughter on a *Passport2Purity* weekend. So, again, go to FamilyLifeToday.com; or call 1-800-FL-TODAY for more information on how you can get the *Passport2Purity* kit sent to you. Again, our website is FamilyLifeToday.com; and
our toll-free number to order is 1-800- “F” as in family, “L” as in life, and then, the word, “TODAY”.

Now, we are encouraged, here at FamilyLife, by the number of listeners who have already responded to what they’ve heard us talking about this month. We had some friends of the ministry, who came to us earlier this year, knowing that summertime is often a challenging time for ministries, like ours, because there’s a decline in donation support for our ministry over the summer months. That’s been a typical pattern we’ve seen in years’ past. Folks said: “We want to make sure you’re ready for that. We’d like to see you with a little surplus as you head into the summer.” So, they offered to match every donation we receive, this month, on a dollar-for-dollar basis, up to a total of what is now $603,000. That’s our matching-gift fund.

Would you consider, today, going to FamilyLifeToday.com, clicking the button that says, “I CARE”, and making an online donation; or would you call 1-800-FL-TODAY to make a donation over the phone—again, knowing that your donation will be doubled and you’ll be helping us get ready for what can often be some challenging summer months? Let me say, “Thanks,” in advance, for whatever you are able to do. Please pray for us this month that we would take full advantage of this matching gift and that listeners would be generous.

And make sure to join us back again tomorrow. We’re going to hear more from Dennis Rainey about what moms and dads can do to make sure their sons and daughters are ready for the adolescent years. We’ll talk about that tomorrow. Hope you can tune in.

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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