Bob: The family Barbara Rainey grew up in was far from perfect, but there were still plenty of reasons for her to honor her father and mother.

Barbara: My parents really modeled a great marriage for me, and I am most grateful for that. I let them know that that was the thing I was most grateful for. My father came from a home that would, today, be labeled severely dysfunctional. My mother's home, on the other hand—she grew up feeling insecure because her parents had marital problems. Eventually—when she went away to college, and after she met my father, and married him—her parents did get a divorce.

So, I look at my parents; and I look at the marriage that they modeled for me. I'm amazed that they were able to pull it off because of where they both came from.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Wednesday, March 19th. Our host is the President of FamilyLife®, Dennis Rainey, and I'm Bob Lepine. Every husband and wife lives out their marriage in a context. They have a past. As we look to honor our fathers and mothers, it's important for us to keep that context in mind. Stay tuned.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us on the Wednesday edition. When you heard that old recording of your wife’s voice, you looked over at me like, “Who is that?!"

Dennis: Yes. You know, what folks are about to hear is a broadcast that's 20 years old.

Bob: It is more than 20 years old. In fact, it comes from a message that goes back before FamilyLife Today went on the air. So, this message may be a quarter of a century old.

Dennis: Yes.

Bob: And that's why you sound the way you do and why Barbara sounds the way she does.
Dennis: Right. It was interesting because this—what you’re about to hear—is Barbara talking about returning home to honor her dad and her mom through a written tribute.

Bob: This idea of writing a tribute to honor your parents really came out of your study of the fifth commandment—the commandment that says, “Honor your father and your mother.” You’re not suggesting that, once you do this, you can check the box and say, “Well, I’ve done that.” This is just a very practical / very tangible way to speak words of honor. They’re powerful words; aren’t they?

Dennis: They are. My dad, Bob, had a word that I remember him—it’s funny how, as I get older, certain words that my dad used are kind of bouncing around in my brain—he had a word called “bushwhacked.”

Bob: Yes.

Dennis: And I remember the first time I spoke on the fifth commandment, out of the Ten Commandments. I felt bushwhacked by God. It was like, “There’s more here, young man.” I was single the first time I spoke about this. I was speaking about it to a bunch of high school kids in Dallas, Texas. I was teaching them about the fifth commandment and about how they needed to honor their parents through their obedience, through their respectful tone, and by how they responded to their parents.

I just remember that it got very, very quiet with those high school kids; and it bushwhacked me. So, I began to develop the message, over the next decade, starting in—really, in 1971/72. This, ultimately, has become a life message. We put it together in a book that’s now survived some 20 years. I’ll tell you—I wish our listeners could see some of the people, who’ve come up to me at our Weekend to Remember® marriage getaways or when I’ve met radio listeners who’ve done this—and how they shake my hand. It’s not like I wrote the fifth commandment, for goodness’ sake.

Bob: Right.

Dennis: I just called them to find a practical way of kind of putting a milestone in place through a written, framed tribute that they read to their parents. There’s no way to describe the profound impact that this has on both the child and the parents—and, importantly—not in every case, but importantly—in a bunch of the relationships between parent and child. It does a lot to heal some of the disappointment and the failures of the past.

Bob: Well, let’s hear how Barbara talks about her experience of writing a tribute and honoring what you call “The Forgotten Commandment.”

[Recorded Message]
Barbara: Dennis encouraged me, after he had done this with his mother, to do the same with my parents. We talked about it for a while because, initially, I wasn’t quite ready to do that because I knew that it wouldn’t be a very easy thing for me to do. I come from a family that’s very secure. We had a very stable home environment, but we weren’t very open in our family. My parents are the same generation as his, and they’re not very transparent. We don’t talk about emotional things in our family very much at all, and we were pretty good at denial in our home.

As a result, when you deny things, psychologists tell us, you also deny the good with the bad. And so, as I sat down to begin to write a tribute to my parents, I had a really difficult time coming up with what I wanted to say. I sat and looked at a piece of paper. It was blank for hours on end. I would try again at another time. I would sit and look at that piece of paper. I’d maybe jot down two or three thoughts. I was beginning to get frustrated because I wasn’t able to come up with anything. It was much more difficult than I had even thought it would be to write that because I was having a hard time finding those things that I valued—that I could express. And yet, I knew they were there. I was having a hard time digging them up, however.

But, finally, I was able to finish writing my tribute. It was not too long before Christmas—because I had intended to give it as a Christmas gift, as well. We managed to get it typeset, and get it framed, and picked it up on Christmas Eve—just in the nick of time. We went to my parents’ house the following day, on Christmas afternoon, to give that gift to them and to participate in Christmas, as a family. We took our children. Dennis had it all planned—how we were going to do this—because he mailed his to his mother. He told me—he said, “My only regret is that I didn’t go and give it to her personally and read it.” He said, “I think you need to read it.” I said: “I’m not sure I want to read it!” [Laughter] I think I’d rather mail it.” [Laughter]

But he convinced me that I, too, would regret it if I didn’t read it. So, Christmas afternoon, we went to my parents’ home for Christmas. We carried that picture with us—and took it—and gave it to them for Christmas. Dennis got all the kids, and some aunts and uncles, and others kind of off in a corner so I could have this moment alone with my parents. We went over in the dining room, and the three of us sat down. After they opened it, I took it back from them and told them that I wanted to read it to them.

I began to read them what I had written. You have never heard anybody read so fast in your life. [Laughter] I knew I needed to do that because, I knew if I didn’t read it quickly, I would never finish it. I was absolutely committed to finishing reading the entire thing to them. So, I read quickly and did manage to finish.
What I ended up writing were several things. I wrote my tribute in the form of a thank-you for the gifts that my parents had given me. I thanked them for a strong work ethic because I did gain that from them. I am very, very grateful today for that strong work ethic that I got from them, as a child.

I thanked them, too, for the gift of common sense because I do believe that I have common sense. It's a tribute to them that I have that today. I also thanked them for the discipline to finish things. I remember my mother telling me on many, many different occasions, “ Anything worth doing is worth doing well.” She would talk to me about how important it was to follow through and finish things. Today, that's something that I'm committed to doing; and I'm trying to teach my children, as well. I know it came from them and from what they taught me.

There were some other things that I wrote in my tribute. One paragraph that I'll read to you said this: “You also expressed trust by allowing me to express my creativity at your expense. You let me decorate the house at Christmas, arrange flowers in the summer, and fix up my room the way I wanted it. But the one that takes the cake is when you let me paint the bathroom fire engine red with white and black trim, a thing I don’t think I’d let my kids do.” I wouldn’t let my kids do it. [Laughter] “But I’m very grateful for that expression of trust because it gave me a greater sense of self-confidence.”

But the paragraph that I wrote last, and saved for last, was the most important. The reason it was the most important is because it was about the example of their marriage. My parents really modeled a great marriage for me, and I am most grateful for that. I let them know that that was the thing I was most grateful for. My father came from a home that would, today, be labeled severely dysfunctional. It was a very insecure home. His mother had some problems, and they talked about that when I was a kid. We all knew it. Eventually—when she went away to college, and after she met my father, and married him—her parents did get a divorce. Even though they didn’t divorce when she was a child, she grew up, basically, in that same kind of an environment.

My mother’s home, on the other hand, would probably also be characterized as dysfunctional, I suppose too. She grew up feeling insecure because her parents had marital problems. She’s told me, before, that she wondered—on many occasions, when she would come from home from school in the afternoon—if her mother would still be there. Eventually—when she went away to college, and after she met my father, and married him—her parents did get a divorce. Even though they didn’t divorce when she was a child, she grew up, basically, in that same kind of an environment.

I look at my parents—and I look at where they both came from—and I have compassion now on them, as people, because of the kinds of homes that they grew up in. And I look at the marriage that they modeled for me. I’m amazed that they were able to pull it off because of where they both came from. So, I thanked them for that especially.
I said: “The last gift I mention is in no way the least. In fact, it is probably the greatest because it is foundational to all the others. It is the example of your marriage. I cannot recall a single argument or disagreement between you. It was apparent that you loved each other, cared for each other, and liked each other. I never felt insecure or fearful that you would leave one another or get a divorce. I treasure that gift of your good, solid, happy marriage. I attribute a great deal of the success of my marriage to the example that I saw in yours.”

I’m really glad that I went ahead and wrote that tribute and gave it to my parents, even though it was an emotionally difficult moment for me and for them, because, as I finished reading it, we all three cried together and embraced one another. Even though that was hard because, in our family we don’t express that, it was a precious moment that I will never forget. It was a real treasure for them and for me to share that time together.

There have been some very interesting results for me, as a result of doing that for my parents—giving them that tribute—because I wasn’t looking for anything in return. I gave it to them as a gift. Yet, God has really been gracious to give us some benefits as a result of honoring my parents.

One of the results of giving my parents the gift of honor is that it has caused me to notice more the things they did right. It forced me, in the process of writing that tribute, to focus in on all that was good and ignore all that was bad.

The second result for me is that it freed up some of my emotions. The actual act of giving it to them and reading it through with them was very healing in our relationship.

Third, I’ve seen a real growing openness in my relationship with my mother—not that we didn’t have a good relationship—it’s just that it’s growing and it’s developing. I’m finding that, occasionally, my mother will begin to say things to me that I think before she would have never said. She’s opening herself up to me in some different areas, and we’re having some wonderful conversations. I’m really enjoying that developing relationship with her.

God has taken what was not very easy for me to do and has blessed it because I know that it was obedience to His Word that caused me to do that. I knew God wanted me to, and I followed through on it, and it’s been a pleasure to see what God has done with it in my family.

**Dennis:** There are two other tributes that I just want to share with you briefly before we move off this point because there may be people out there who say: “I can’t identify with either one of those homes. I come from”—perhaps—“a broken home,” or a home where
your father or mother was an alcoholic. One of my closest friends in Little Rock—Robert Lewis, who is also my pastor—wrote a tribute to his parents. It was entitled, “Here’s to My Imperfect Family.”

He said, “I spent a better part of a day writing the tribute.” He said, “I have never been through anything in my life like this tribute,”—for he, like Barbara, said it was extremely difficult—and said that he cried most of the day as he wrote this tribute. He said it was like it was therapeutic to write the good stuff down that they had done as he went through the process of writing this tribute.

I won’t read it all to you, but I do want to read a little bit. It’s interesting. I have a harder time reading this one, even though it’s not about my parents, than I do sometimes about my own. I guess because there are so many, today, coming out of homes such as this. My mind races to those little kids growing up in homes that perhaps could be typified as this.

I think of fishing with you, Daddy, at Kepler’s Lake. Boy!—that was fun! I still enjoy it every time I relive it.

Thanks, Daddy, for saying, “I’m sorry,” when you wrongly hit me in anger one day. You don’t remember the incident, I know; but I do. It’s deep inside me now. It comes back to me every time I need to say those words to my children and to my wife. Seeing that day in my mind makes the humbling process easier.

For not panicking when it seemed your son had become a religious fanatic, and for letting me know the financial ride was over after college, and I was on my own. There is much more, of course—much more. I guess, if I were offered just one wish, it would be for one crisp fall evening, where the smell of burning leaves, and a Bearcat game was in the air.

I would be outside enjoying the bliss of youthful innocence. Mom, you would be frying those oysters; and, Daddy, you’d be crooning out the words to a familiar song. So, here’s to my imperfect family—one that fell short in many respects—but one whose love makes the shortcomings easy to forget. Here’s to the family that never had it all together, but one just perfect enough for me.

Robert read that to his parents for Christmas. He gathered all four of his kids around as he read it to them. They sat at their feet by the Christmas tree and read it to them. He didn’t realize it; but at the time he read it, his father would die two months later.
My regret about my tribute to my dad was that I wrote it after his death; but, even though he is gone, I am still honoring him with my words.

I close with two illustrations of two men—one who did it wrong and the other who did it right. This letter was slipped to me at the end of this talk, a number of years ago when I gave it. I want to read it to you. It’s from a young man who didn’t do it right:

Dear Dennis, I appreciate your talk today. It brought back some memories I have about my dad. I want to share the most important with you. Every day that I can remember, my dad took me, hugged me, kissed me goodnight. Every night he told me that he loved me. My dad died four-and-a-half years ago, Dennis, when I was a freshman in college. I was with him the night he died. That night he hugged me, he kissed me, and he told me that he loved me.

Dennis, I was too embarrassed to tell him that I loved him. He died of a sudden heart attack two-and-a-half hours after I went to bed. I remember standing over his body, saying, “Dad, I love you,” but it was a couple hours too late.

One of the people that helps put on this conference is Jeff Schulte. You’ve seen him up here trying to keep things rolling along throughout our weekend together. His family decided, last Christmas, they would give a tribute to his mom—a single mother who helped raise six. What I’ve got is a book with six chapters. It’s called “We Will Be a Family.” The day on the front is September 23, 1966. That was when a single mom sat six kids down and said, “Times are hard, but we will be a family.” It’s written to Marjorie Schulte by Gene, Jack, Jim, Joanne, Jeff, and Judy—six chapters that they read to her last Christmas. They got it on videotape. It’s one of the more interesting videos I’ve ever seen. The video camera was having a shot of the mother having each chapter read by her son or her daughter. Between the camera and the mom—having each chapter read—was a large waste can where the Kleenex®es kept being deposited throughout the entire service—which lasted, I guess, an hour-and-a-half / two hours through the process.

Do something courageous and give your parent a gift—your mom / your dad—a gift that will grow in value as the years pass. I know, for many of you, it’s going to take courage; but don’t take the chicken’s way out and ship it in the mail. Go read it to them.

In conclusion, help your mate realize he has no control over what his parents may have done wrong, but he does have a responsibility regarding how he will relate to them.
today. You and I have a responsibility, today, to fulfill the commandment of the Lord: “Honor your parents, that your days may be long.”

[Studio]

Bob: Again, we’ve been listening to a message, given more than two decades ago—a classic life message from Dennis Rainey about honoring your father and your mother. We’re airing this because we are re-releasing your book, The Tribute. It’s now called The Forgotten Commandment. We’re hoping that a whole new generation of young people will do what you were challenging all of us to do, back two decades ago.

Dennis: Yes. It’s time—it’s time to bring this back to the forefront and challenge adult children—and, for that matter, some of the younger children who are in their teenage years / their early teen years—to think about this. This is a command to honor your mother and your father—that means in attitude, in action, in your words, and in how you treat them.

I think challenging folks to begin to pray about and think about writing a tribute is a healthy process for both them—and by the time they get it in print and read it to their parents—they’re going to find all kinds of healing takes place and encouragement in the relationship. I just know that now, today, Barbara’s dad is no longer with us. She said it to him—he knew that she loved him and respected him. Her mom—now, as a widow, living alone—has got that tribute as a reminder, as well, to be able to reflect on. She’s a great lady. I love her and just have the utmost respect and admiration for her. These tributes are important gifts that we can give our parents.

Bob: And you don’t have to wait until Christmas to give it. You could give one at Mother’s Day, or Father’s Day, or an anniversary.

Dennis: Create a day.

Bob: It may take until Christmas before you can work through the process of getting one of these written; but a good place to start is getting a copy of the book that Dennis Rainey wrote, 20 years ago, called The Forgotten Commandment: Experience the Power of Honoring Your Parents.

Again, this is the brand-new, 20th Anniversary Edition. It’s just come off the press. We believe there are a lot of young couples—in their 20s, 30s, 40s—even couples in their 50’s—who would benefit from reading through this book and asking the question: “How can I honor my mom or my dad? What would God have me do—in terms of reaching out, with honor, to my parents?” Get a copy of the book, The Forgotten Commandment. Go to FamilyLifeToday.com. You can order from us, online—FamilyLifeToday.com is
Now, as we head into the home stretch in the month of March—it’s hard to believe March is already more than half over; right? One of the goals that we’ve had—here at FamilyLife, during the month of March—has been to try to rally listeners to consider becoming Legacy Partners—folks who pray for and help support this ministry on a monthly basis.

We’ve got thousands of families, all across the country, who are currently Legacy Partners; but the truth is—the number of Legacy Partners we have and the amount of money that they contribute to FamilyLife Today does not cover the cost for producing and syndicating this daily radio program. So, our hope is that, here, during the month of March, there might be 1,000 new Legacy Partners who would step forward. That’s 20 in every state where FamilyLife Today is heard. We’re asking you if you would be one of those 20 in your home state who would become a new Legacy Partner.

When you sign on to become a new monthly donor, we will send you a welcome kit that includes some CDs, a book with some date ideas for couples, and our brand-new Legacy Partner Cookbook with recipes collected from Legacy Partners, all across the country. There are recipes from Dennis and Barbara, and Mary Ann and me, and some of the rest of our team, as well.

We’ll include that in the welcome kit when you sign on as a new Legacy Partner today. Go to FamilyLifeToday.com. Click the button that says, “I CARE.” You can enroll as a Legacy Partner right there. Or call 1-800-FL-TODAY and say: “I want to be on the team. I want to be a Legacy Partner.” We’ll get you signed up; and we’ll get the welcome kit, with the cookbook in it, out to you.

Now, tomorrow, we are going to continue talking about honoring our parents. We’re going to hear from a number of people; in fact, you will know some of these people we’re going to hear from tomorrow. We’ll hear how they responded to the challenge they got from Dennis Rainey to provide a verbal tribute for their mom or their dad. That’s coming up on tomorrow’s program. 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 will 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.
We are so happy to provide these transcripts to you. However, there is a cost to produce them for our website. If you’ve benefited from the broadcast transcripts, would you consider donating today to help defray the costs?

Copyright © 2014 FamilyLife. All rights reserved.

www.FamilyLife.com