Bob: What kind of a relationship should a father have with his son? Roland Warren says, “We have a really good example of what the father/son relationship ought to look like in our Bibles.”

Roland: When you think about God’s relationship with Christ—you know, God was a heavenly Father. He listened to Jesus. You see that—Jesus talked about that in the Lord’s Prayer. He protected Jesus—and the angels came and warned Joseph before Herod could get to Him. He comforted Jesus—that whole story of the Garden of Gethsemane. What is that about? That’s comforting. He met Jesus at His point of need after He fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. There were angels there for Him.

Those four things—if you’re a dad—and you’re listening to your kids, and you’re protecting your kids, and you’re comforting them, and you’re meeting them at their point of need—that’s what nurturing really is.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Friday, June 6th. Our host is the President of FamilyLife®, Dennis Rainey, and I’m Bob Lepine. We’re going to get some better understanding of how we are to be a father to our children by looking at the good and the bad examples we find in Scripture. Stay tuned.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us. I’m trying to think: “Where is it in the Bible—there is some place in the Bible—I guess it’s the Proverbs 31 woman, whose children rise up and call her blessed. Isn’t that where it talks about that?”

Dennis: Correct.

Bob: There is no place where it talks about the children rising up and calling their dad blessed; is there? [Laughter] Is there?

Dennis: Yes.

Bob: Where?!

Dennis: It’s in the Ten Commandments.
**Roland:** That’s right.

**Dennis:** The fifth commandment—it’s the one with a promise. Exodus, Chapter 20, verse 12—it says, “Honor your father and your mother.” I’ve got a question for you: “Are you worthy of honor with your kids? Do you think they would say, ‘You are worthy of honor’?”

**Bob:** Well—

**Dennis:** I’ll answer it for you—

**Bob:** Okay. [Laughter] Thank you.

**Dennis:** —because it’s a little self-serving.

**Bob:** It’s a hard question.

**Roland:** Tough crowd here.

**Dennis:** It is. It is a tough—but of course, you are. You’ve lived an honorable life. You haven’t lived a perfect life—neither have I / neither has any dad—but we’re going to talk today about being an honorable dad that is worthy of honor and how we can do that in a practical way.

**Bob:** Well, it’s interesting that you should zero in on the fifth commandment, as well, because we have just recently released the 20th Anniversary Edition of a book that you wrote, back when *FamilyLife Today* was first getting started—a book called *The Forgotten Commandment*. You really believe the fifth commandment is one that has been abandoned by this generation.

**Dennis:** I just had a conversation with a young lady, whose dad is dying of cancer and he doesn’t have long to live. I got a copy of this book, and pressed it into her hands, and said: “You’ve got an assignment because he doesn’t have long to live. You need to say it to him while he’s alive and you need to put it in print.” And she said, “Oh, my brother and I—we’ll both do it.” And I look forward to hearing the rest of the story on that.

But today, we’ve got someone who has written his own book. It’s called *Bad Dads*. Roland Warren joins us on the broadcast. He is the former President of the National Fatherhood Initiative—a great organization. You’re currently the President and CEO of Care Net—

**Roland:** Yes.

**Dennis:** —which is the nation’s largest network of pregnancy resource centers. You and your wife, Yvette, have two grown sons. And you’ve written this book, *Bad Dads*. I
want us to go back to December 10, 2008, when two sons—two brothers decided to make a phone call.

Roland: Yes, these two brothers—they made a call. They had had a conversation with their father. He had basically revealed that everything that they believed about him and everything that they believed about their business was a sham. And—

Bob: So, these two boys had been working for Dad.

Roland: Yes.

Bob: And they were thinking that the business was on the up and up; and Dad sits them down and says, “It isn’t all that it seemed to be.”

Roland: Yes, it’s a house of cards. Essentially: “I’ve been lying to you for years, and I’ve been lying to your mother for years, and I’ve been lying to our friends for years. I’ve been lying to our community for years.”

Bob: And they blew the whistle? They called the FBI?

Roland: And they did. They did. Yes.

Dennis: I have the headlines from The Wall Street Journal® of these—what these two brothers did and the confession of a father.

Roland: Yes.

Dennis: He said, “And I have left my children and grandchildren a terrible legacy.” You’re, of course, talking about?

Roland: Bernie Madoff.

Dennis: And your point is?

Roland: People talk about it from the perspective of—economics, and finance, and this, that, and the other, and bank accounts, and those kinds of things—but really, it’s a fatherhood story. It’s a story about a father who, basically, made it difficult for his kids to honor him. That’s one of the bad dad mistakes that I talk about quite a bit.

Bob: And it’s interesting because, in your book about honoring your father and mother—The Forgotten Commandment—you make the point that some children do have a hard time finding much to honor their parents about. Yet, you challenge us—all of us—to look for the things—and you say they are there if we will look; right?
**Dennis:** They are usually there. I’ve had a few people say they could never find it or find those things to honor their parents about; but I think most parents, even the ones who weren’t what we would call great parents—and speaking of fathers, now, who maybe were a bad dad—there are those matters in their lives that you can find. You can find a way to honor them for the position they held in your life and what you learned from them.

For instance, your dad—

**Roland:** Yes, my mother and father split up. He wasn’t engaged with us on a day-to-day basis from the time I was about seven years old. And even before that, he was starting to not be around. And you know, “How am I going to honor when I’m angry, or when I feel hurt, or when I feel rejected, and things of that nature?” And the fifth commandment doesn’t give you that out. [Laughter] It really doesn’t.

**Dennis:** No, it really doesn’t.

**Roland:** It doesn’t. But the flip side of that, to me—and this was the epiphany I had when I was writing the book—was that the fifth commandment—we look at that commandment for kids—but it really is just as much for adults because it’s easier to honor someone who is honorable.

And if you think about it, if you really love your children, then, basically, I’m going to try to make sure that it’s easy for them to follow the fifth commandment. In order for them to follow the fifth commandment, that means I’m going to have to be honorable. So, there is an implied command in the fifth commandment for fathers and for mothers to live a life that’s honorable. And if you really love your kids, you’re going to want to make it easy for them to be able to live out that commandment.

**Dennis:** One of the bad dads you listed from the Old Testament was Saul. You said he didn’t leave a noble legacy to his descendants.

**Roland:** He made it very, very difficult for his sons to honor him and his daughters to honor him because of the life that he lived. He was a man who kind of suffered from the fear of man. To some degree, he was disobedient to God. He treated his children harshly and others harshly—was incredibly jealous of David to the point that he even tried to get his children to kill David—his son, Jonathan.

And when they wouldn’t do what he wanted him to do, there is a story in the Bible that he actually threw a spear at his son because he was so angry that his son wouldn’t do something that was unjust / that was wrong. And you know, that’s the kind of thing that happens when you make it difficult for your children to honor you.
Bob: Jonathan’s loyalty was much stronger to his friend, David, than it was to his father, who was trying to tell him to do these things. I mean, if Jonathan had to pick sides, he was siding with David—not with Dad; right?

Roland: Yes. The interesting thing to look at, in terms of him siding with a person—but a lot of it was he was siding with honorableness. You know, David was living a life of honor, at that point in his life. Jonathan knew that David had many opportunities to kill Saul and he wouldn’t do it. Why? Because David was honoring God because Saul was still God’s elect.

What Jonathan was drawn to in David was the very thing that he should have been drawn to in his own father, which was honorableness. When you are honorable, your children are drawn to that; especially, in this culture where there is so much dishonor and there are many people who would dishonor them. They’ll be drawn to that. It’s very compelling and very engaging, from my perspective.

Dennis: Most of your dads are famous dads that we’ve heard of.

Roland: Yes.

Dennis: One of them, however, may take a little explanation for you to tell his story. You talk about how Manoah was a bad dad.

Roland: Yes.

Bob: And some people are probably going—

Dennis: “Manoah?”

Bob: —“I know I’ve heard of Manoah. I know he’s somewhere in the Bible.”

Dennis: They’re confusing him with Noah. [Laughter]

Bob: But they do know his son, Samson, pretty well; don’t they?

Roland: They do. The story of Samson is one that people know well. And it’s the story, in many ways, of squandered opportunity—basically, a misuse of the talents that God has given you. And Manoah’s sort of bad dad mistake was that he failed to tame his child’s talents.

One of the things that I try to do with that particular story is to unpack a couple of things. The first thing is that every kid, in a sense, is a Samson—in the sense that there is a God-given talent. If you don’t take the time to really tame that talent, it could be used in a way that causes him to miss God’s best and, at times, can be more destructive to other people as well.
Dennis: You’re really talking about a dad who knows his flocks well.

Roland: Yes.

Dennis: The Psalmist really commands a shepherd to know his flocks well. And when you say, “tame,” you’re really talking about leveraging or feeding ability with a child—helping them be a good steward of that gift / that talent that they have.

Roland: Yes; yes, absolutely. And you see that principle really played out in the story where Jesus talks about the parable of the talents. The land owner—he leaves—and he gives one, five; and one, two; and then one, one. And you see what happens in that story that he’s just as pleased with the one who multiples the five, who multiples the two. He’s just as pleased—even though they had unequal talent, but they had equal character. And the reason why he is so disappointed with the one who didn’t do anything—it wasn’t because he didn’t multiply his talents. It was because the character that was underneath it—was the reason why he didn’t do that.

So, even when you’re talking about your kid’s talents—what you need to be dealing with, frankly, is the character underneath—I think, particularly, if you have a child who has a talented area. A lot of times—and particularly, if you see that early-on in them—it’s one that’s significant in the culture’s view. There is a temptation to not deal with that the way that you should. You can either accommodate the flaw that your child may have as it pertains to that talent or you may participate in a way that you should not.

And you see that in the story of Samson—where he accommodated—you know, when Samson wanted to have a wife that was not the kind that God had designed. He participated—

Bob: He wanted a Philistine wife—

Roland: Yes.

Bob: —and he came to his dad and said, “Go get her for she looks good to me.”

Roland: Absolutely.

Bob: And dad went along with that!

Roland: And he knew. Manoah was a godly man. If you read the Scriptures, you see that he was a godly man. And as soon as he found out that Samson was going to be a Nazarite—from that moment, he went back—and he went back, and he said, “I want that angel to come back so I can learn how to raise this boy.”
So, he knew how special that was; but it’s a temptation that you have—would be to accommodate. And he participated in the wedding even though he knew that the way that the wedding was structured was going to be a way that was going to be destructive. See, in that culture, a woman was supposed to go back with her husband to his people; but they structured the wedding in such a way and the marriage in such a way that she stayed with her people, which meant that Samson was going to have to go back to the Philistines again to get—that’s where he was. That’s where his children were going to be. They were always going to have an ability to control him by using his wife. You see, early in that story, that they did just that.

**Bob:** He was going to be unequally yoked; and then, he was going to live—not among the godly—but among the ungodly.

**Roland:** Yes.

**Bob:** And that’s what his father facilitated.

**Roland:** Absolutely.

**Dennis:** You’ve got six ways men can be better dads; but before we get to those, I have to ask you to speak to this because there are dads who are listening to us, right now, who say, “Okay, I’m really going to be a good steward of my son or my daughter’s talents,” and they drive them off a cliff, trying to become an Olympic athlete/an all-pro tight-end.

I mean, you had a son who played major college football at—

**Bob:** Well, it was North Carolina.

**Dennis:** —North Carolina.

**Bob:** It was North Carolina. I wouldn’t call that major college football. [Laughter] I’m sorry.

**Dennis:** We’re going to get mail.

**Roland:** We are in Arkansas. So, that’s going to—

**Dennis:** I know one guy—

**Bob:** If he played at Eastern Carolina, it’d be a different deal; but it was North Carolina.

**Dennis:** Our mutual friend at Biola, Tim Muehlhoff, will be writing us about this.

**Roland:** Yes.
Dennis: No; but anyway, dads can sometimes overdo it. They can turn it into a god.

Roland: Yes.

Dennis: Speak to that.

Roland: Taming your kid’s talent doesn’t mean that you possess their talent. You know, it’s not controlling their talent in that sense or in any way that’s going to be destructive or to give them the perspective that it’s more about their doing than their being.

That really is—Manoah did try to step in with Samson. What he was really talking about was his being like the underlying character. Again, the parable of the talent really, really reflects that. It is their talent that you’re taming. You do not possess it. You do not own it; but you’re, basically, trying to help them use that talent in the way that God has designed it to be used.

Bob: So, when Justin started to show that he had some football ability—and you played college ball for four years—how did you handle not being the dad who is just there turning his kid into a football robot? How did you affirm what he was doing without getting carried away with it?

Roland: Well, there are a couple things that happened there. One of them really was my experience playing football and having the view that that’s not the end of the world / that’s not the be—you’re just one knee injury away from that. So, I think I had a sober view that way; but I think the bigger thing for me was trying to help him see God in football—not to make football his god, but to make him see God in football.

So, when they won, we want to talk about that in the context of: “What does that mean in terms of his relationship with God?” And when they lost: “What does that mean in terms of his relationship with God?” and, “What are the principles that you’re taking from that when you have adversity?”

And I tell you—there was one thing that happened that really kind of blew me away—that really helped me see that he got this. He was all-state running back, and broke every record at his school, and the whole deal. And The Washington Post came to interview him. He had just done amazing in the state playoffs—and they came to interview him. And the whole time, what he did was—he deflected and talked about his team—talked about his team—talked about his team. I thought to myself, “He really gets it.”

You know, I see him, even as a man, now—he’s 28—he has that same character, even today. He still does that. He’s others-centered. Sports was a mechanism to help him do that.
So, what do we say about anything that we do?—it’s for our good and for God’s glory. And when those talents are there—that was what was supposed to happen with Samson. He got the powers for his good and for God’s glory; and basically, what he ended up using them for was his good and his glory. When you do that, it’s not God’s design.

**Bob:** Alright; so, somebody who reads your book is going to see a lot of mistakes that dads have made—some things not to do—but once again, if you are sitting down with a new dad and you’re saying: “Here are the basics. Let me just lay out for you some principles that I would say are the core.” What would you say to that new dad?

**Roland:** The longest chapter in the book is “6 Things That You Must Do to Be a Good Dad” because being a good dad isn’t about what mistakes that you don’t make or what you don’t do—it’s about what you do. And that’s the thing, from my standpoint, that’s very, very powerful. I wanted to make sure that I spent a lot of time focusing on that and trying to help you walk through some steps that I’ve seen, over the years, working with thousands of fathers—some things that you must do in order to be a good dad. I kind of laid those things out.

The first one, really, is focused on this notion of good fathers affirm their children. I came across this one really in a very interesting way. I was going to speak at a prayer conference. I was kind of stumbling on what I needed to say. I was thumbing through my Bible, and I came across the passage in the Bible that talks about the baptism of Jesus.

I’d read that many, many times. It’s in Matthew, Chapter 3, verses 16, and goes on into Chapter 4, verse 1, where Jesus goes out to be tempted by the devil. And as I read through that, God gave me an insight. And the insight that I got there was this notion of affirmation before temptation—affirmation before temptation.

See, here was Jesus, fully man and fully God, but God the Father knew the power of an affirmation in His humanity: “This is my Son in whom I am well pleased with Him.” Then, He goes out and then faces temptation. As you know, faced all the temptations, as we can get, and without sin.

I started to think about that. I said: “My gosh!, How powerful that is for earthly fathers”—this notion of affirmation before temptation because one of the things that we know is that the tempter will come. I don’t care where you live—I don’t care where you live. The tempter will come. When you know whose you are, and you know who you are, no temptation is going to be able to seize you because everything that Satan offered to Jesus were things that He already had.

And I started to think about how many children haven’t heard that from their father—have not heard, “This is my son. This is my daughter.” And that affirmation was not in
His doing because he hadn't started His ministry. It was in His being. That's a powerful, powerful example for any dad.

**Bob:** So, affirmation is important. That’s a critical role for a dad to play. What else?

**Roland:** The other piece here is about good fathers are physically present. Kids spell love, “T-I-M-E.”

**Bob:** Right.

**Roland:** And I think one of the problems or challenges that guys do is—they try to replace presence with presents—with a “t”. Really, your kids want fathers that are not going to give of them—they want fathers who are going to give *themselves*. And that’s a really key role for you there.

Another key thing for good fathers is for them to be emotionally available. And you know, a lot of times when we think about that, we think about being emotionally available. Too often, fathers will put that in the mother’s camp—this whole notion around nurturing. But nurturing is something that good dads do. It means that you are supporting and being involved in every aspect of your child’s growth and development.

**Bob:** So, what does that look like? I mean, if a dad is going to be emotionally available, how do you let your kids know you’re emotionally available? Some dads are going, “I’m not even sure what emotionally available means.”

**Roland:** Well, it’s easy to unpack it when you think about God’s relationship with Christ. You know, God was a heavenly Father. He listened to Jesus—you see that and Jesus talking about that in the Lord’s Prayer. He protected Jesus—and the angels came and warned Joseph before Herod could get to Him. He comforted Jesus—that whole story at the Garden of Gethsemane. What was that about? That’s comforting. He met Jesus at His point of need—after He fasted for 40 days and 40 nights. There were angels there for Him.

So, these are—I mean, those four things—if you are a dad—and you are listening to your kids, and you’re protecting your kids, and you’re comforting them, and you are meeting them at their point of needs—that’s what nurturing really is.

**Dennis:** That’s a great picture.

**Roland:** And we’ve got the example, here in Scripture—that helps us understand that.

**Dennis:** That is a great picture, indeed. And I couldn’t agree more with what you’ve done here in your book. You really challenge men to become the dad that God created them to be—to be responsible for being a dad. And there is one last assignment I’ve got for you before we’re done today.
But I just want to turn to the men in our audience, Bob, and mention something, again, that I mentioned earlier this week. That is: “I really challenge you. If you want to be a better dad and not a bad dad, if you want to be a better man and not just a mediocre man, get some other guys together—maybe some fathers and sons—and check out our Stepping Up® video series for men.” It’s practical. It’s biblical. It’s fun. It’s entertaining. It’s a 30-minute video you can watch with some guys. You can start talking about where you’re running into difficulty, as a man, and what’s challenging you and keeping you from being the man God made you to be.

**Bob:** Yes, actually, the way this is set up—it’s a 10-week study for guys to go through. You get the DVD set, and you get manuals for the guys to go through it. And you can do this, by the way, in your living room with a group of four or five guys; or you can do it with all the guys in the church. We’ve seen it happen both ways. But you watch about 30 minutes-worth of video each week. Then, you go through the workbook and have some discussion questions. It’s a great study. I mean, we’re hearing great stuff back from the guys who are going through the Stepping Up study.

So, our team was hoping that, this summer, we’d be able to get a lot of guys who would be willing to lead one of these studies. They’re making a special offer available this week. When you buy the video kit, we will send you five workbooks; and we’ll pay for the workbooks. So, you buy the videos; we’ll buy the workbooks for the guys. All you have to do is agree to take five guys through the study this summer. All you have to do is go to FamilyLifeToday.com and click the link where it says, “Go Deeper.” The information about the special offer for the Stepping Up video series is available there. Again, go to FamilyLifeToday.com and click the link that says, “Go Deeper.”

You’ll also find information about Roland Warren’s book, *Bad Dads of the Bible*, which we’ve got in our FamilyLife Today Resource Center. You can order that book from us, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com; or you can call 1-800-FL-TODAY to order the Stepping Up series or to order Roland Warren’s book. And if you have any questions about the Stepping Up series, just call us. We’ve got folks available who can answer any questions you might have.

And real quickly, we want to remind you about the week that is left in our matching-gift fund campaign. We’re hoping to take full advantage of a special matching gift that’s been made available to us. Every donation we receive, between now and next week, is going to be matched, dollar for dollar, up to a total of $410,000. We’ve heard from many of our listeners. We’re grateful for that. But if you’ve not yet made a donation, would you consider going online right now and make a one-time donation to support FamilyLife Today, knowing that that donation is going to be matched, dollar for dollar? Or call 1-800-FL-TODAY and make a donation. Or mail a check to FamilyLife Today at P O Box 7111, Little Rock, AR. And our zip code is 72223.

Dennis?
Dennis: Bob, it’s been a treat to have Roland Warren on the broadcast. And you know, I knew about you back when you led the Fatherhood Initiative and, really, appreciated your leadership there. And I have heard a little of your story over the years. I know that your dad, early in your life, divorced your mom. We’ve been talking about doing a tribute. And I wonder: “If I had the ability—your father is gone now—if I had the ability to bring your dad back and seat him across the table from you,” I wonder, “could you give him a 90-second tribute?”

Roland: Yes, I think I could. I mean, I heard a line, years ago, in a movie that “The pain then is part of the happiness now.” As I said, earlier in the program, my father was a guy who was the life of the party. He was a godly man. You know, after he went through that period with my mom, he actually became a Christian—and frankly, became a pastor and really changed but wasn’t able to fully embrace this.

But I would say that:

Dad, I’m thankful for you—that you inspired me around laughter and that you inspired me around being able to see the best in people. I saw that and observed as he interacted with other folks. It’s a special gift. I think it’s something that, from my standpoint, as a son, I certainly want to emulate.

And I know he was a man that loved God—and that was the desire of his heart—to serve God. And that, from my standpoint, is an important aspect of who you are, as my father. Certainly, on my end, I want to pass on a legacy—bits and pieces, obviously, I got from you—but certainly want to pass on a better legacy, even to my own kids. And I think you’d be proud of that.

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