Bob: Do you find there are important things in your life, in your marriage, in your family that you just never get around to? Here is Steve Watters.

Steve: We all have routines. Even if we haven’t stopped to think about our routines, there are those things we do on a regular basis. We just get into those grooves. The question is: “Does your routine know that you’re married? Does your routine know your values?” The reality is—a lot of things in our routine aren’t necessarily moving us along toward the things that really matter in life.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Monday, August 4th. Our host is the President of FamilyLife®, Dennis Rainey, and I’m Bob Lepine. We’re going to talk today about how we can do a little strategic planning for our marriage and our family that really will enable us to make sure the important things are getting done. Stay tuned.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us. I saw what we were going to be talking about today and I thought—well, I’ll tell you what I thought about. I thought about the World Series. Do you know why I thought about the World Series?

Dennis: I’m trying to draw this one up—the connection.

Bob: I thought about you and your son going to see a World Series baseball game—

Dennis: Yes. I know where you’re headed.

Bob: Somebody asked your son what one word describes you. What word did he come up with?

Dennis: He said: “Oh, that’s easy. Intentional.”

Bob: Mr. Intentional. That’s been the nickname that we’ve given you around here as a result of that—Mr. Intentional. This is all about being intentional; isn’t it?

Dennis: Yes, and even though I questioned my son’s judgment in terms of that, he did reflect back. I have done a poll with my kids. Yes, I think I’ve been pretty intentional over the years. Barbara and I have—well, frankly, I think she’s had as much of an impact
upon me in doing planning and thinking strategically than what I brought to the marriage.

**Bob:** Well, it takes two. I think we serve one another in that regard in marriage.

**Dennis:** We have a couple with us—Steve and Candice Watters join us on *FamilyLife Today.* You guys come about this honestly. Candice, tell the truth. Was it you that brought the strategic planning to your marriage?

**Candice:** No. In fact, Steve brought it up first when we were dating—and said, “Let’s go plan our holiday month.” It was the beginning of December. It started then, and we have been planning ever since.

**Dennis:** You guys did tie the knot. You went on to have four children—been married since 1997. You’re Vice President of Communications for Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Tell us how you really became so intentional about strategic planning, as a couple.

**Steve:** I think what started it is truly—before that Christmas planning, we had been up to a new cottage that Candice’s parents had bought on a lake, up in Michigan. Something about that lake house made you want to dream big and think big thoughts. Candice and I were already beginning to think of our life together and projects we were working on.

Then, we went back, nine months later, after that Christmas planning. We had gotten married. We spent some of our post-honeymoon period there—spent a lot of time between, actually, waiting for some new jobs to start. It gave us lots of time to think and dream. So, something about that place was special. Our first year of marriage—we decided, right after the Christmas time, to head up to that cottage, and just dream, and plan.

Then, the next year, I got inspired for some reason. I gave Candice a door knocker for Christmas. I said, “How about this year, we accessorize this door knocker with a house?” We went back to the cottage again and said, “Let’s go figure out how we can find a way to build a house—to actually do this.”

**Candice:** No—no, we weren’t always so strategic, I think, though, because you have to know—that second time, we went out to eat; and we wrote out our plan on the back of the placemat. It was a paper placemat. We went back to the cottage. We thought, “Hey, wouldn’t it be cool if we hid this somewhere at this house, and then we’ll come back in a year and see how we did on our plan?” So we climbed up on the kitchen counter and taped it to one of the soffits, where no one would see it over the summer, and came back a year later—and got that plan down, and looked at it, and said, “Hey, we didn’t do too bad; but I wonder if we would have done more if we’d actually taken the plan with us so we could refer back to it.” [Laughter]
Dennis: Yes. I understand that.

Bob: As you’re describing that, I’m thinking—Mary Ann and I have dreamed together on occasion—gone off. We’ve been in those down times when you can just take a breath, and you can look toward the future and think, “What do we want to be about?” But there’s a big gap between dreaming and implementing. I think there are a lot of couples, who have dreams or hopes or desires for the future, but to turn that into reality is where they start to hiccup.

Dennis: They don’t know where to start. First of all, you have to take the time to pull back and out of the swirl. I used to compare what Barbara and I did, in terms of planning, to canoeing on a river.

There’s a spot north of here called the Buffalo River. It’s a spectacular national river that is not all that difficult, but it does have some rapids that can turn your canoe over if you’re not careful. I compare what we did to pulling our canoe off to the side, walking downstream a bit, and taking a look at how other people were navigating the rapids, trying to learn how you are going to steer this thing to get through this spot.

There’s one spot called Grey Rock. If you don’t go in to it right and come out of it right, you’re going to turn your canoe over. Well, a lot of couples don’t take the time to step out of the stream, step out of the busyness of life, and take a look at: “Where are we headed? Where are the currents of life taking us, and how do we want to be more proactive and on the offensive and not just react defensively?”

Have you all found that to be true as well?

Steve: Absolutely. I think that is the primary issue—is that we will be busy. We will do things. The question is: “How much of it will we be intentional about? How much of it will we actually take that time to ask, ‘What are the most important things?’ so that we're not just filling up our calendar.”

Candice and I were looking at some time-use calendars—kind of some studies on how people spend their time. I was surprised to realize the average American spends 34 hours a week watching television; and then another 3 to 6 hours with some kind of recorded program, or movie, or whatever; and then 23 hours a week with social media—texting, emailing, and checking Twitter®/Facebook®—and realizing that is time that is being used somehow. Obviously, there are a lot of positive ways you can use that—there’s information, there’s a lot of time just some relaxing and entertaining—but that’s a big chunk of time that people are using.

And so just stopping to ask: “How could we use a few hours of that differently?—in a more constructive way—to make sure that’s not what’s setting our agenda, but we’re actually—we’ve got a compass that has a biblical orientation to it.”
Candice: I think, too, the thing that we’ve found is that people tend to be very proactive in January. They have New Year’s resolutions—and they’re going to plan their money, they’re going to plan their work, they might plan their vacation. They’re going to plan all these important things; but they’re not going to stop and say: “How are we going to plan our marriage this year? How are we going to be intentional about discipling each of our children, based on their ages and their spiritual development?”

There are the things that do require, Dennis, like you said—to step out of the water / to step out of the stream and to be quiet before the Lord, and pray, and read the Word, and say: “God, what are we supposed to do this year? What do You want us to do? How can we be fruitful this year?”

Dennis: And it’s not just a matter of creating a bucket list of some things you want to go do.

Candice: Right.

Dennis: It really is taking a step back and going—well, for instance, you guys have a 14-, a 12—

Candice: A 12-, a 7- and a 5-year-old.

Dennis: So, you’re in the thick of it.

Candice: Yes.

Steve: Yes.

Dennis: I mean, you’re shaping the lives of these four, and you’re headed somewhere with them.

Candice: That’s right.

Dennis: And if you don’t know where you’re headed with your children, the world does.

Steve: That’s right.

Candice: That’s right.

Dennis: The world has a good system of communicating its values and impressing them on these little hearts.

Steve: That’s why we, at the beginning of each year, we stop and we ask: “Okay, what year are our children turning? What year is this in our marriage? What stage are we at? What things are significant?” That’s what caused us, ahead of time, to say: “You know
what? This is a Passport2Purity® year. This is the year that we need to get it on the books. We need to plan.”

And we had plenty of experiences where we recognized some things too late—where we realized there were things that—it would have been good to have seen this coming on the calendar and gotten a plan together—instead of backing our way into it. By starting that process, earlier in the year, we were able to book the place for the Passport2Purity. We were able to plan for our son’s 13th birthday, where we actually got to do a lot of the things that were meaningful because we had the time and the preparation to go into it, proactively.

Bob: And a part of this whole idea of strategic thinking is not just about your marriage, as you’ve said; but it’s also thinking about: “What age are our kids? What are the issues they are going to be facing?” I know, as you guys sit down and map out a year, you really pull back and say: “Okay, we have a 14-year-old. So, what’s on the horizon for that 14-year-old; and what are the things we need to be intentionally addressing?”

And then the next step is: “Okay, if that’s what we want to do, now, how are we going to do it? When are we going to do it?”—starting to really fit it into your plan for the year ahead.

Steve: You know, I think it is something that is not that unusual for people to do—strategic planning at the office. I think the problem is—marriage and family is what gets squeezed out. I think it’s recognizing that it’s marriage and family that gets pushed to the edge—that we said, “That is important. We don’t want other urgent, pressing things squeezing out what’s important,”—recognizing this is something we need to bring intentionality and urgency to it because no one else in our lives is going to for us.

Dennis: I think what happened to us is—we started having children, and I don’t remember us ever having a strategic planning time. But after you’ve had six children—you have six kids under the age of ten—if you don’t have a plan, it is chaos.

Steve: Yes.

Dennis: Now, even if you do have a plan—

Bob: It’s chaos.

Dennis: —it’s chaos! [Laughter]

Dennis: But with a plan, you can be headed somewhere. I really do have Barbara to thank in terms of coming alongside me and saying: “You know, Sweetheart, we really need to plan. We really need to have a conversation about where this thing is going—and where each child is going—and what values, what character qualities we want to build into each child,” because every one of our children are very different.
They all had different character needs—different needs, in terms of development—than the other ones did. If you’re not intentional about that—if you don’t have that reduced down in writing somewhere to say, “Where are we headed for this year?”—If you don’t, you’re just going to play defense. You’re going to run your fool head off—running around to Little League, to soccer, to all the practices—and never really make an impact in the child.

Bob: Tell our listeners about the project you’ve been working on—that we’ve been partnered together on—because I think this is exciting. I think everybody understands the challenge, and they’re just looking for some help in how to do this.

We got together and thought: “Okay, what if we made that help available in an interactive mobile environment?—put that in a digital setting on an app for the iPhone® or for the iPad® or for an Android—where people could do their planning and store their planning on their phone. Maybe folks would have a shot at being able to get some of this stuff done.”

Steve: This is something we were excited to see happen because Candice and I—along the way, we’d have friends who would find out that we’d done some planning. They’d say, “Oh, that’d be great to do.” We would start trying to walk them through what we did, and we’d realize that it doesn’t always translate. It’s not as convenient to help someone—distance.

We started getting excited—realizing there are some nice technologies available now to help people to capture those ideas—to look at a framework for what is important—be able to take some time / to be intentional about capturing that—and then to be able to have the ability to get some reminders / to get some notifications that help you live out that plan that you’ve committed to—especially the opportunity to look at your routine / to look at the things that are pressing in on your life—and be able to continue to hold up marriage and family, in the midst of all that busyness, and have it stand out from the clutter.

Bob: I think the point that you make—to have it instantly accessible on your hip—your planning is being carried with you—or in your purse. I guess I defaulted to where mine usually is, right there on my hip—in your pocket. I think that ups the ante in terms of your ability to accomplish what you wanted to do.

Dennis: In fact, we kind of rushed by something you said, Steve, that I want to underline. You talked about reminders. Digital is a great way to be reminded of something you promised each other.

Steve: That’s right.

Dennis: Just a chance to be reminded: “How are you doing on that goal that you and Candice set at the beginning of the year?” If we have those reminders, on a regular
basis—there’s nothing like that reminder and the accountability of knowing that your spouse also got the same reminder, at the same time.

Candice: And one of the powerful things about that, Dennis, is the way that it fosters oneness between a husband and a wife because you’ve taken time, at the beginning of the year, to set a framework.

That is a commitment—now you both are on the same page. So, when the reminder comes up, you have the entre—you have permission then to maybe have some conversations—where, in the past, it would just sound like nagging. Now it’s just saying: “Hey, honey, let’s revisit what we talked about. How are we doing?” It keeps you honest. It holds you accountable; and I think it builds oneness because you’re on the same journey together—heading in the same direction that you both agreed to.

Steve: But I think that really is the key issue—that we have to stop and recognize the threats to our oneness—that we have an enemy who doesn’t like oneness among believers. There are so many times in which Christ is saying, “Be one, as the Father and the Spirit and I are one,”—that we are marked, as believers, by our oneness—and very much so in our marriages, as believers. Oneness is what is reflecting God. It is our testimony to the world around us.

So, anything the enemy can do—to drive wedges between us / to push couples apart—and he has a lot to work with—in a culture in which we are going in different directions. We have jobs and careers pushing us in different directions. We have technology that’s driving us in different directions, and we have a culture of individualism where everybody is focused on their own needs. You have marriages that are kind of people with individual agendas coming together—living as roommates—who really don’t know what it means to live as one. It’s hard work to be one, but that’s what God is calling us to.

Dennis: You really are touching on something that has caused many an argument between Barbara and me. We have probably had more “stimulating discussions” [Laughter] around our calendar, and our schedule, and our commitments than anything else we’ve faced, as a couple. There’s a reason for that—the calendar is a place where your values show up.

Steve: That’s right.

Dennis: It is the place where they are lived out. I like the question you guys ask as you kind of build out your planning process. You ask the question: “Does your schedule know that you’re married?”

Steve: Yes.

Dennis: You’re implying that some couples really are two individual people, doing their own thing / being successful, but their lives aren’t intersecting at much of any point.
Steve: Yes. You think about the couples who get married but keep separate checking accounts and other things that communicate that they’re individuals. I think very much the same thing is true with their schedules—their calendars don’t overlap. You don’t see any regular date nights—and other opportunities to continually be connecting, and being one, and on the same page—and plenty of opportunities where one is scheduling something and the other person never knows about it until it happens.

Dennis: It’s never happened in our marriage. [Laughter]

Candice: Well, when you bring the kids into it, too, they get excited. If you sit your kids down in January and say: “Guys, here are the big rocks—here are the big things we’re going to try to fit into the vase, if you will, of our life this year. Then we’ll fit all the little stuff around them, but here are the big things.” If you put a list on the fridge and they can see that, they get excited. They hold you accountable too. They say: “Hey, Dad. I can’t wait for that trip that’s coming up this summer. What are we going to do to get ready?” The more you bring your kids in—the more it builds unity in your family.

Dennis: And the thing is, Candice, if they see the big rocks like you’re talking about, it makes it easier to say no to some of the other “good” things that come their way that they want to go do.

Candice: Right. You’re teaching them how to set priorities. “You know, we can’t do it all. So, if we’re going to do this, then we can’t do that.”

Bob: So, does your schedule know that you’re married, Candice?

Candice: It does.

Bob: How does it know it? [Laughter] I’d like some proof.

Candice: I think the biggest way it knows is that Steve and I have a standing date, if you will, on Sundays. We just sit down with our schedules and say, “What’s going on this week?” I know when Steve is going to be home for lunch. I know when I’m going to have a free day—that he’s not coming home—and I can plan something else in that slot.

Our kids know that he’s going to be home for dinner at night. We know, going into a week, what the commitments are. I’m able to count on having face time with him every day—not Face Time on an iPhone—but real live touch points / communication—sit down and time to pray together. We have all of these things built into our routine, and then our routine works for us because we’re connecting.

Steve: I think the routine is the key issue—that we all have routines. Even if we haven’t stopped to think about our routines, there are those things we do on a regular basis. We just get into those grooves. The question is: “Does your routine know that you’re
married? Does your routine know your values?" The reality is— a lot of things in our routine aren’t necessarily moving us along towards the things that really matter in life.

**Dennis:** And for you, the routine involved a date night.

**Steve:** So, the date night is a big part of it—the date night with our kids—so a Daddy Date Night. The routine of family discipleship—the routine of our Friday morning discipleship time that I have with my son on one Friday / and the other one, Candice with our oldest daughter—these kind of things that we get into our routine. Then we know our routine is working for us because it’s a commitment we’ve made.

Several mornings we’ve woken up and thought: “Oh, man! It’s Friday morning. It’s that discipleship thing, and I’ve got such-and-such going on,”—but we made the commitment—“Let’s do it.” We always come back from it, saying, “That was the most important thing I did all week.” It does require rethinking soccer, and music lessons, and other things like that; but if you think about what parents are called to do—there are some primary things, and there are some secondary things.

We’ve let so many secondary things—like sports and music lessons—become the primary things on the calendar. We squeeze to the margin those primary things that God has made very clear are our responsibilities.

**Dennis:** For us, that Sunday night date night was survival. Bob, did you have one with Mary Ann?

**Bob:** We didn’t have it regularly. I remember Mary Ann throwing in the flag, on a number of occasions, and saying: “Hey, we need a time out here. We have to get our calendars in alignment,” because, if you’re not deliberate about doing it, then you do find yourself drifting apart; and you find yourself frustrated: “I didn’t know you were...” “What? You never told me about that!”

**Dennis:** See, our date night started out kind of more of a—like a romantic date night—

**Bob:** Yes?

**Dennis:** —but it ended up being more of an arm wrestling contest around the schedule. [Laughter] I mean, our schedules—with a husband, and a wife, plus six kids—you had a lot of activity that was just one wave after another hitting you.

Frankly, I do not know how you can raise kids in this culture today if you don’t have that island of clarity—that moment when you pull your canoe out of the stream / pull off to the side—take a look at where everybody else is heading, how the currents are moving you along, and say, “What can we do to be proactive about leading our family in the right direction?”
Bob: Well, it’s not like you need six kids to need that island of clarity. You need that island of clarity in the midst of whatever you have going on. You need to have some time where the two of you can just really focus on what you want your priorities to be. This past weekend, at the I Still Do™ event that we hosted in Chicago, we shared with the audience that was there the new FamilyLife Grow app—so that a husband and a wife can get their smartphones—and they can work together to develop a plan that they can sync with their calendar and work into the fabric of their lives.

I wanted to make sure our listeners knew about this as well. You can go to FamilyLifeToday.com. The information is available there about the new FamilyLife Grow app. It’s free. It has a lot more content than just the planning tool that Steve and Candice have done—there are other resources to help strengthen your marriage and your family.

I should also mention that, while we were in Chicago this past weekend at I Still Do, we were challenging the folks, who were there, to make one of their priorities—getting engaged with other couples and helping to strengthen marriages. A lot of people, who were at the event, took advantage of a special offer we were making on our Art of Marriage® small group material and our Stepping Up® small group series for men. So, I asked, “Can we make that same offer available to our FamilyLife Today listeners? And they said, “No, we can’t make that same offer available; but we do have a special offer we’ll put together for FamilyLife Today listeners.”

Go to FamilyLifeToday.com. Click the button that says, “GO DEEPER.” You can get information about the special offer we’re making, this week, on The Art of Marriage and Stepping Up—in fact, many of our small group resources. There is a special offer involved this week. So, again, go to FamilyLifeToday.com and click the button that says, “GO DEEPER.” You’ll find the information available there.

And, of course, those of you who live in Portland, we are headed your way—I Still Do—Saturday, August 23rd, at the Moda Center. We still have tickets available. Go online to IStillDo.com for more information about how you can attend this one-day celebration of the marriage covenant for couples—coming to Portland here in a couple of weeks.

Now, a quick “Thank you,” to those of you who help make FamilyLife Today possible—help make the new app that we’ve just developed possible. Thanks for your support of all that’s happening, here at FamilyLife Today. We appreciate your partnership with us. Right now, we’d like to say, “Thank you,” if you can help us with a donation by making available a set of seven activities—recipes for helping to develop your child’s faith.

These are some fun activities for the whole family. They are our way of saying “Thank you,” when you help support this ministry. Go to FamilyLifeToday.com—in the upper right-hand corner, where it says, “I Care,”—click that link. You can make your online donation. Or you can call 1-800-FL-TODAY and make a donation over the phone. Be sure to mention that you’d like the seven recipe cards for developing your child’s faith.
Or mail your email address to us, along with your donation, to P O Box 7111, Little Rock, AR. The zip code is 72223. We'll send you a link so that you can download these recipe cards and start having some fun with your family.

Now, we hope you can join us back tomorrow. We’re going to continue to talk about priorities in our marriage and in our family. Steve and Candice Watters will be here. Hope you can be here as well.

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](http://www.FamilyLife.com) to help defray the costs?

Copyright © 2014 FamilyLife. All rights reserved.

www.FamilyLife.com