Bob: If your children have moved into middle school, you’ve had the talk with them about the birds and the bees; right? Have you had the talk with them about how far is too far? Here’s author, Gerald Hiestand.

Gerald: When I’m talking to parents, who have kids who are pre-adolescent, they are very excited to get clarity on this issue. When I’m talking to parents, who have kids who are in high school—who are already in dating relationships—it’s like a big sigh. So, that’s why I always encourage parents, “Don’t start thinking about it when your kid turns 14—

Dennis: Right.

Gerald: —or 13. You have to have some clarity in your own heart and mind before they come into adolescence.”

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Thursday, October 16th. Our host is the President of FamilyLife®, Dennis Rainey, and I’m Bob Lepine. We’re going to see if we can help provide some clarity and some biblical thinking today about sex, dating, and relationships. Stay tuned.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us. You know, one of the standard interview questions—this is just a little Interview 101 for our listeners, who may wonder about—

Dennis: Oh, I thought maybe you were instructing me.

Bob: No, no, no.

Dennis: We’re coming up on our anniversary of being on FamilyLife Today, and I thought maybe you were—[Laughter]

Bob: I am done coaching you.

Dennis: —taking me back to 101.
Bob: I’ve done all of the coaching I can possibly do. [Laughter] But one of the standard questions for young interviewers—when you are interviewing an author—is to say, “So, tell me, ‘Why did you write this book?’” And I am curious—the two guys we’ve got in here—“Why did they pick”—they could have picked anything they wanted to—to write on—in the theological world.

Dennis: They have written a book called *Sex, Dating, and Relationships*. This is a great book for parents, for singles, and really for the Christian community to think rightly about who we are, from a human sexuality standpoint.

Bob: And both of these guys are married—so the dating part is part of the past.

Dennis: That’s right.

Bob: Well, we’ll just leave it at that. [Laughter]

Dennis: I was wondering where you were going with that. Were we moving to Radio Interviewing 201? [Laughter]

Gerald Hiestand and Jay Thomas join us on *FamilyLife Today*. Jay/Gerald, welcome to the broadcast.

Gerald: Great to be here.

Jay: Thank you.

Dennis: Good to have you guys with us. Gerald is Senior Associate Pastor of Calvary Memorial Church near Chicago. Jay is Senior Pastor of Chapel Hill Bible Church in none other than the City of Blue—Chapel Hill, North Carolina. They have collaborated together to write a book about our human sexuality.

You guys really talk about, in this book, how the Christian community is really a mess when it comes to thinking rightly about this. Really, the line seems to converge in two places—one, with Christian singles—and the other, with parents, as they are instructing their kids. Share with our listeners how the Christian community isn’t thinking right about our sexuality.

Gerald: Yes, there is a recent article that just came out in *Relevant* magazine. I don’t have it here in front of me, but the statistics were rather disturbing. There was ultimately about 20 percent of evangelical singles, between the ages of 18 and 29, are remaining abstinent—so something is not working. There seems to be some sort of breakdown there. I thought that seemed high.

So, I talked to the people—the singles at my church. I kind of read that statistic to them and kind of get their thoughts like: “Hey, does this seem a little high? It seems high to
me.” And they said, “Actually, it seems a little low, based upon our experience.” So, that—again, statistics, you don’t know what you do with them—but clearly, there is a breakdown.

And I think the thing that we—Jay worked with college students—I was a youth pastor in a former life for a while. I think just the question of purity—I think is getting dropped—not on the question of pre-marital sex—that I think you can even talk to a non-Christian and say, “What do you think the Christian standard is on sex before marriage?” They would, at least, know what that is. So, I think there is clarity there.

What we are trying to do, with the book, and where we think there is a real breakdown is pre-marital sexual ethics—like, “Where do the boundaries get drawn beyond just, ‘Don't have sexual intercourse,’ but where do the boundaries get drawn before that?” There is just not a lot of clarity—from the church coming to parents / from parents coming to kids. It tends just to be a free-for-all there, at that point.

**Bob:** Well, but you remember being an adolescent. Everybody’s questions, back when I was an adolescent, was, “Okay, I know how far you can’t go’ but how far can you go?” I mean, that question has been asked in youth groups since the Dark Ages—I have to presume. You work in a college town. Do you find that what Gerald was experiencing, in Chicago, is the same thing that you were hearing from college students in Chapel Hill?

**Jay:** Absolutely. I think that question is the perennial question. Either it can drive you toward a bit of legalism—because it’s always about some kind of hard-and-fast line. As long as you don’t cross that—well, your heart must be right; you know?—if it comes to this external behavior / kind of mechanical perspective on sexual ethics. Or—and I think this is what’s happening, now, with young people—they are getting disheartened with the very question of how far is too far on sexual ethics and a bunch of other ethical issues. Permissiveness is now kind of the rule of the day and, “Let’s focus our energy on things like social justice and clean drinking water,”—which are wonderful things—but ethics, in general—I find young people are getting tired of the questions because of a bit of legalism of Christianity of their parents or generations past.

**Dennis:** Well, I think they are getting tired of it because, I think, they want the boundaries removed. Honestly, I’m not surprised by the statistics you are talking about. I think what happens, though—when you say those statistics, the average parent, who is raising a young person today, goes: “Oh my goodness! What in the world are we going to do?” So, how do we begin to address this? In other words, help a parent decide: “How should they think about sex and communicate a godly perspective about sex to their children, as they grow up?”

**Bob:** Yes, if it’s not a boundary approach that you are taking, what kind of approach should you be taking?
**Gerald:** Well, I would say that there is a boundary that needs to be set up. So, I mean, Jay’s making a fine point. I think where the problem is—is when the boundaries are arbitrary. So, here’s what we tend to give young people—we say—we give them a biblical standard: “Be pure,” which you can rub around like a wax nose. I mean, what does that really mean? Or you give them an objective personal opinion like: “Keep it above the neck,” or “Don’t do anything with your hands,”—like we give some sort of personal opinion, but there is no real biblical authority that backs that up.

What we’ve really tried to do with the book is to give a biblical objective opinion—so, not just a biblical subjective opinion or an objective personal opinion—but a biblical objective opinion. That lack of clarity, I think, is what’s leading to a lot of confusion.

So, the same group of statistics—they asked the people that they polled, “Do you believe that sex should be reserved for marriage?” Seventy-five percent of the people said, “Yes.” Again, there is clarity, as to what the standard is—there, at that point—but beyond that, what we tend to do, as pastors or parents, in getting so fuzzy in opening up the door to allowing sexual activity to begin in pre-marital relationships—which, I mean, runs counter to the way that even just we work, biologically and physically—and that we’ve opened up the door here—that it’s no wonder that we are not able to shut it by the time we get to sexual intercourse.

**Dennis:** When we were raising our kids—we had six—we used to talk about: “There are two kinds of kisses. There is a peck or a kiss that’s an ‘I like you,’ kiss that does not demand a sexual response. Then, there is a kiss that says more than ‘I like you, and you are a great person to be with,’ that goes over beyond a line and demands that the other person begin to respond. There is a clear distinction between those two kisses,” we told our kids.

As parents, we’ve got to decide what we are going to do with all of these standards—what are you going to challenge your kids with? Both of you guys are parents; right? What are the ages of your kids?

**Gerald:** Mine are turning ten, seven, and four this summer.

**Dennis:** Okay; and Jay, yours?

**Jay:** Nine, seven, and two five-year-olds.

**Dennis:** Okay, so, let’s put the oldest in here in the studio with you, right now. What are you going to challenge those oldest children with? What kind of standard—what kind of approach, to the heart and to the boundaries, are you going to take?

**Bob:** The biblical objective approach that you talked about taking—okay?

**Dennis:** Okay, your kids are across the table.
Bob: Right.

Dennis: Let’s go, guys.

Jay: Well, we’re a fairly affectionate family. So, that’s not good when one person gets a cold because the rest of us are inevitably going to get it—[Laughter]—a lot of hugs and kisses. So, I’d say to Peter, my oldest—I’d say: “Peter, there is a kiss you would be comfortable giving your momma. And when you get a little bit older, you’re going to start to feel a certain way about girls. Your body is going to have some natural ways of wanting to express yourself, especially with a particular girl you might have feelings for. That expression you would never want to give to your mom. It would be the most reviling thing in your heart and mind ever.”

Dennis: [Laughter] You’re doing a great job, Dad.

Jay: “So, we have two categories of showing affection. Affection that is fine for your sister or for your mom—even, we will hug and kiss—but there is a different type of affection God has given us that’s only for a man and a wife.” I would begin to break it down like that.

What I would want to eventually do is talk about the why: “Why is it that God has set up life like that—where there is a certain type of affection that is totally fine for any kind of relationship to say—‘I love you / I appreciate you,’—and a different type of affection for a husband and a wife—that is only for a husband and a wife?”

Bob: And that’s where we do get to some of the biblical objective standards—that you are talking about—so it’s not so much about: “What can I do?” and “What can’t I do?” but: “What am I trying to incite / what am I trying to—

Gerald: Yes.

Bob: —“what response am I asking for?”

Gerald: Yes—to the point Jay is making—I think what we are wanting to say in the book is that—not that this is just a good idea—like: “Here is a good way to think about purity—think about how you would kiss your mom,”—but, if you are committed, as we—I think all Christians/evangelicals, mostly—we are committed to the idea that sexual activity should be reserved for marriage. I mean, that’s a pretty standard approach.

Bob: Whether we are living that out or not—

Gerald: Right, whether we are living that out or not—we, at least, agree to that, theoretically. What’s happened is—we’ve redefined sexual activity so narrowly to only mean sexual intercourse. We’ve lost sight of the fact that sexual activity extends far
Beyond that. There just simply is a kind of physical touch, that stops short of sexual intercourse—that is inherently sexual. There is just no way to parse it out in any other kind of direction. Once the activity becomes sexual, then, it should be reserved for the marriage relationship. You’ve already crossed into the realm of sexual immorality.

**Bob:** When I was a junior in high school, I was at a hockey game one night with a girl—we were on our first date. In the middle of the hockey game, she put her hand on my knee.

**Dennis:** This was how many years ago, Bob?

**Bob:** This was 1973. I remember—I can show you the seat where I was sitting in the arena; okay? [Laughter] That’s a pretty innocent gesture—a hand on the knee. If I put my hand on your knee, you wouldn’t think anything; but boy, I thought something that night, as I was on that date. It’s the same action. So, how do I, as a teenager, try to figure out: “This hand on this knee is okay / her hand on my knee is not”? How do I work that through in my heart?

**Gerald:** Yes, I would say that the first thing to be observed is that there are some activities that are—inherently, all the time, every time, without exception—sexual. So, there are certain forms of kissing that are just always sexual. The best way to like just kind of bring clarity on this is to think about it in the family context—like Jay brought up. That kind of kiss would never be appropriate, ever, between a brother and a sister, or between a mother and a son, or a father and daughter.

I think the baseline is determining which activities are, inherently, sexual all the time. Those need to be reserved for the marriage relationship. At the minimum, any kind of what we call—make-out kissing or passionate kissing—we just need to own that those are sexual—that’s a sexual activity and needs to be kept in the marriage bond.

**Bob:** Okay, time out.

**Gerald:** Yes.

**Bob:** No passionate kissing until after “I do,”—is that what you are saying?

**Gerald:** Yes, because passionate kissing is clearly a sexual activity. I mean—we don’t want to say that. I remember, as a student, my pastor would talk to us about our dating relationships. We would say, “How is your physical relationship?” And that kind of masks what’s going on there. Shaking hands—that’s physical; right? But making out isn’t just a physical relationship—that’s sexual. You’ve moved into a sexual activity, at that point. We don’t talk about passionate kissing as a sexual activity, but it clearly is a sexual activity because it would never be appropriate between biological relatives. The reason it wouldn’t be is because it’s sexual. We inherently know it to be sexual.
**Dennis:** Okay, so, if you said that—your oldest is a boy, just turned ten—if he said, “Dad, are you saying that passionate kissing before marriage is a sin?”

**Gerald:** I’d say, “Yes.”

**Dennis:** And he’d say, “Why?”

**Gerald:** I’d say, “Because it’s a sexual activity, and because sex is to be reserved for the marriage relationship.” I mean, obviously, there is more that could be talked about there; but just like—you’ve got the elevator sales pitch—if you’ve got two minutes to make your point—

**Dennis:** No doubt.

**Gerald:** —I would say: “Hey, listen. Sexual activity is to be reserved for the marriage relationship. Anything that is sexual should be reserved for the marriage relationship. How do you know, son, whether this is a sexual activity or not? Well, if it would be wrong for you to do with your little sister or your mom, because it would seem that that’s something not right—sexually-inappropriate—then, that’s how you know it’s a sexual activity and should be reserved for the marriage relationship.”

**Dennis:** You know, I’m glad you answered the way you did because there are some of our listeners here who are, right now, they are going, “What planet is this show from?”

**Bob:** I’m sitting here thinking, “Did you guys expect to sell any copies of this book with what you are talking about?” [Laughter]

**Dennis:** I wrote a book, one time, that one of the responses to the book was to throw it across the room. This one is not even going to be purchased because there are going to be people, who say, “That’s got such a standard that is totally different from the culture,” but that’s really what you are after here. You are after a biblical standard—more of an approach to this area of sexual ethics, basing decisions and boundaries on what the Bible says; right?

**Gerald:** Yes, I think the big failure of the Christian community, right now, is the failure to really reckon with what constitutes sexual activity.

**Bob:** Right.

**Gerald:** I mean, everyone agrees sexual activity should be reserved for marriage; but no one wants to acknowledge that certain kinds of kissing are—inherently, all the time, without exception—can’t be conceived of as any other thing than a sexual activity.

**Bob:** Jay, do you know who the first person I ever heard propose this kind of a standard was?—any idea?
Jay: No.

Bob: She lived in your neighborhood, when you were at seminary up at Gordon College.

Jay: Elisabeth Elliot.

Bob: I remember, in college, somebody said: “Have you read this new book by this Elisabeth Elliot lady? She’s saying you shouldn’t kiss until you get married.”

Jay: Yes.

Bob: And I remember laughing at the absurdity of that in the 1970s.

Jay: Right.

Bob: Okay, we are long past the 1970s. Here you are upholding this standard. Is anybody going to listen to this?

Jay: The parents of my church graciously—I guess because they love me—decided they would get the book, and they’d read through it with the youth group. The response—I think Gerald and I have both been getting is—“I can’t say that I like your conclusions; but as I read the book and you guys go through the Scriptures, I’m having a hard time—

Dennis: Yes.

Jay: —“thinking of a way around it.”

Dennis: Yes.

Jay: So, whether I have youth beginning to curb their dating relationships or not, I’m still talking with some of them; but no one, I think, has come back at us with: “Hey, here is a total hole in your argument. Exegetically, you left this whole bit out.” You know what I mean? We’re trying to just get back to the Scriptures and say, “Look, do the Scriptures allow us to draw the boundary markers where we have?”

Even as conservative evangelical Christians, we’ve just kind of arbitrarily said that certain forms of affection, as long as it’s not intercourse or near intercourse, are fine for a dating relationship. “The reason maybe you should be careful there is because it gets your engines going. So, be careful because of the way it begins to draw toward intercourse”; but there is no sense of the activity is, itself, sexual.
Dennis: When we were teaching our kids—and when I taught a sixth-grade Sunday school class—that ultimately became the content for *Passport2Purity*®, which is a father/son, mother/daughter getaway before they encounter the hormones of the teenage years—I used to quote—and still do quote—Romans, Chapter 16. This is kind of what we built our teaching around. Paul said, in Chapter 16, verse 19: “For your obedience is known to all so that I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil.”

And what I used to say to our kids: “You don’t have to like what I’m saying to you and the challenges we’re giving you, as parents. We’re trying to protect and preserve your innocence so that—when you get married—you’ll have all of your innocence that you can possibly have to give to your spouse on that wedding night.”

What I say to parents—and I have had many parents tell me they don’t like what I’ve done and what I’ve said—and I say: “You know, that’s fine. Tell me what your standard is. If you don’t buy that, then, what are you going to challenge your children with? What’s the standard? And by the way, what’s the basis for that standard?”

Bob: Right.

Gerald: Yes. In talking to parents in the workshops that I’ve done for parents on this—what I have found is—a lot of parents have been given this same ambiguous answer when they were growing up, through church, that our culture has. So, while it’s challenging to parents—they’re looking for clarity themselves—because, as their kids are coming into the adolescent years, they’re trying—they have to give something to their kids, but they don’t really know what to give them except a bunch of kind of personal opinions and some subjective standards.

What I’ve found is—that when I am talking to parents, who have kids who are pre-adolescent, they are very excited to get clarity on this issue. When I’m talking to parents, who have kids who are in high school—who are already in dating relationships—it’s like a big sigh and a “Oh, how am I going to—

Bob: “How do we reel this back in?”

Gerald: —“back this up / reel it back in?”—yes.

Bob: Yes.

Gerald: So, that’s why I always encourage parents to begin thinking about this—

Dennis: Yes.

Gerald: —don’t start thinking about it when your kid turns 14—
**Dennis:** Right.

**Gerald:** —or 13. You have to have some clarity, in your own heart and mind, *before* they’re coming into adolescence.

**Dennis:** To that point, it’s why *Passport2Purity* is so effective for a 10-/11-/12-year-old—and a parent to go through it with a child so that they have that standard that they’ve talked about in place. They’ve discussed it, and the child has had an opportunity to buy in before the hormones begin to short-circuit all the teaching.

**Bob:** And not all of our listeners know what *Passport2Purity* is. It’s a resource that we created, years ago, to give parents an opportunity to have a weekend getaway—a couple of days—where you spend time listening to some CDs with your son or your daughter, as they head into adolescence.

Our team just recently went back and refreshed the whole *Passport2Purity* experience. We added new music / we updated the adventure journal that your son or daughter receives. We’ve been getting great response from folks, who have ordered the new *Passport2Purity* resource and have gone on one of these *Passport2Purity* getaways with a child. If you’d like to find out more about *Passport2Purity*, go to our website, FamilyLifeToday.com. Click the link at the top of the page that says, “GO DEEPER.” The information is available there. Again, the website is FamilyLifeToday.com. Look for *Passport2Purity* when you go there.

Also, be sure to get a copy of the book we’ve been talking about today—*Sex, Dating, and Relationships*—by Gerald Hiestand and Jay Thomas. We’ve got this book in our *FamilyLife Today* Resource Center. In fact, I sent a copy of this book to my son when he was a senior in college and sent another one to another son who was a freshman in college, at the time. They read it. They gave it a thumbs-up. In fact, they passed it on to their friends—so, a couple endorsements from the young Lepine men, who have read this book.

Again, it’s called *Sex, Dating, and Relationships*. Go, online, to FamilyLifeToday.com for more information. Click the link, again, at the top of the page that says, “GO DEEPER”; or call, toll-free, 1-800-358-6329. That’s 1-800- “F” as in family, “L” as in life, and then, the word, “TODAY.”

Now, quickly, I just want to say a word of thanks, Dennis, to the folks who make *FamilyLife Today* possible—folks who are in sync with our mission and who partner with us in making all that *FamilyLife Today* is about happen. We are a non-profit—we are listener-supported. We couldn’t do what we do—that includes this radio program, our website, our resources, our events—none of that would be possible without the help we receive from folks, like you, who either donate each month or who, from time to time, will pitch in and say, “I’d like to help out and support what you guys are doing because I think it’s important.” We’re grateful for your support.
In fact, we’d like to say, “Thank you,” for any donation you can give today by sending you something that Barbara Rainey has created for families. It’s a chalkboard in the shape of a house. At the top of it, it says, “In this home we give thanks for” and, then, it’s blank. You can take a piece of chalk and write there what you’re thankful for. This is part of her Every Thine Home® collection of resources. It’s our gift to you when you support this ministry with a donation.

You can go to FamilyLifeToday.com and click in the upper right-hand corner of the screen, where it says, “I Care.” Make an online donation, and we’ll send out the chalkboard to you. Or you can request the chalkboard when you call 1-800-FL-TODAY and make a donation over the phone. If you prefer, you can write a check and mail it to: FamilyLife Today at PO Box 7111, Little Rock, AR; and our zip code is 72223. Make sure you include a note that says, “I’d like the chalkboard.” We’re happy to send it to you, and we do appreciate your support of the ministry.

And let me encourage you to be back with us again tomorrow when we are going to continue our conversation with Gerald Hiestand and Jay Thomas—continue talking about young people, sex, dating, and relationships. I hope you can be here for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, and our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our host, Dennis Rainey, I'm Bob Lepine. We will see you back tomorrow for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

FamilyLife Today is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

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