Bob: Dennis Rainey and Barbara Peterson were friends—just friends—when a mentor of theirs, Don Meredith, asked to get together with them one afternoon.

Barbara: We showed up at the hotel room. We went and sat down in these two little dinky chairs in this dimly-lit hotel room. Don sat on the bed, and he said: “Well, you two sure have been spending a lot of time together. I think you’re both old enough and mature enough that you need to decide whether or not it’s God’s will for you to be married or not.” I could have gone through the floor. I’d never, in a million years, expected that to come out of his mouth.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Wednesday, January 28th. Our host is the President of FamilyLife®, Dennis Rainey, and I’m Bob Lepine. We’ll hear today from Barbara Rainey about the time when her friendship with Dennis became a romance. Stay tuned.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us on the Wednesday edition. You know, I’m just sitting here, thinking about—we’re exploring, this week, the seasons of a woman’s life—all of the different chapters that a woman goes through in life. We’re doing that by kind of rehearsing your wife’s life story.

Dennis: And we heard, earlier, a dramatic story—where my wife, Barbara, was single, content on a mission in ministry with Campus Crusade for Christ at the University of South Carolina—and how, just on the precipice of hearing the hoof beats of a horse bringing the knight in shining armor,—

Bob: Yes?

Dennis: —we had to cut off the program. I said,—

Bob: Only the knight could describe it that way.

Dennis: —“You’ll have to wait—you’ll have to wait to hear the rest of the story.”

Bob: Barbara, welcome back to FamilyLife Today.

Barbara: Thanks, Bob.
Bob: Our hope, here, is that, in telling your story, we can kind of help women calibrate: “Am I about the right things in life at the stage I’m in? Am I focused on what ought to be my priorities, at this time?” But it occurs to me—it’s been 20-plus years that we’ve been on FamilyLife Today. This is kind of the first time we’re getting around to this story. I think we are a little late coming to it.

Barbara: Well, anyway, I guess better late than never. [Laughter]

Bob: I guess—“Better late than never.”

I think it’s helpful for a young woman to think back, “During the early chapters of life—when you are single / when you are in high school or college—you should be thinking about: ‘What is God’s design for me? What’s God’s purpose for me?’ That ought to be the center hub from which everything else comes; right? So: “What’s my job going to be?” or “What’s my family going to be?”—or any other choice—really grows out of that hub of: “What am I doing to advance the Kingdom?”

Barbara: Exactly.

Bob: And if something else gets into that hub space, that’s going to bring you discontentment—but when advancing the Kingdom is at the center—then, God’s design for marriage and family, or for your job, or for where you live, or who your roommates are—all of those kind of get in orbit around the hub; don’t they?

Barbara: That’s right. And that’s a good way to put it—that Christ needs to be the hub of our life. He told His disciples—and therefore, us—He said, “Come follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” He challenged those men, who followed Him, to be disciples. When you are a disciple, you do what the teacher does.

So, in my college experience, it was really pivotal for me to understand that my life belonged to the King. My life had been redeemed. I had been changed / I had been transformed, and He was the one who owned me—I didn’t own myself. So, even though I certainly didn’t do it perfectly—I made lots of mistakes because I was young, like a child, and I was green—but at the core, I understood that His plan was the best plan and that doing life the way He designed life to be lived was the best road to follow.

Bob: One of the favorite quotes I’ve heard on FamilyLife Today over the two-plus decades we’ve been on the air—came from Tommy Nelson, pastor at Denton Bible Church in Denton, Texas, who said, “If you are single, your job is to run as hard and as fast toward Jesus is as you can.” He said, “If, while you are running as hard and as fast toward Jesus is as you can, out of the corner of your eye, you see somebody in the same direction, at about the same speed, take a second look.”

Barbara: Yes.
Bob: And it was the summer of 1972 when you took a second look.

Barbara: That’s right.

Bob: You were in Dallas for a big event that Campus Crusade for Christ was hosting, called Expo-72. You were there all summer. The guy, who was running the bus routes for all of the people there was your old friend from college, Dennis Rainey.

Barbara: That’s right.

Dennis: Forty thousand high school kids.

Bob: Right, and you had to get them—you had to make the buses run.

Dennis: They had to come from Denton, from Fort Worth, from South Dallas / East Dallas.

Bob: It’s just hard for me to believe that that was in your 22-year-old hands.

Barbara: Yes, it was hard for all of us to believe—oh my gosh!

Dennis: I believe we’re going to get to heaven and find out there were angels, sent from heaven, driving those buses.

Barbara: No question! [Laughter]

Dennis: I mean, parents—if they had known what was going on—would have been terribly frightened; but yes, that was the summer when both of us were running in the same direction. We both kind of looked out of the corner of our eyes—yes, it was—

Bob: Well, I’ve heard the story; but it’d be—

Barbara: Yes, you have.

Bob: —good for us to bring our listeners up to date with it. You were at the mall, as I remember, walking across the mall parking lot in Dallas; isn’t that right?

Barbara: Well, it started—because, when I moved to Dallas, I didn’t know anybody. I didn’t know how to get around the city—I’d never been there. Dennis offered, very kindly and graciously, to show me around. He said, “I will pick you up and take you to work,”—because we were working in the same building, preparing for this conference.

Bob: Okay, time out—time out. Was there an agenda here?
Dennis: Well, I have to admit—when she showed up at the office that I was working in, I kind of went, “Who-man”—

Bob: “Woman.”

Dennis: —“Who-man—woman! Wow!” You know? And we were—

Bob: She had changed since college?

Dennis: Not really.

Barbara: No, I don’t think so.

Dennis: Not really; but all of a sudden, the friend that I’d had in college and the friendship we enjoyed—there was just kind of this sprinkled stuff; you know? [Laughter]

Bob: Something new? Yes.

Barbara: Pixie dust.

Dennis: Pixie dust—but all of a sudden, I noticed her—not as a friend, but it was like, “Wow!” I remember the dress she was wearing. It was like, “I need to help her around the city. [Laughter] I need to help her from getting lost here,”—this just makes real good sense to a single man.

Bob: Did you have any sense that there was anything more than just he was trying to be helpful?

Barbara: Not, initially, because we had been such good friends. I had decided that he was a good friend. In fact, I considered him one of my very best friends, and I kind of liked it that way. So, I wasn’t really interested in it being anything other than friendship because it was real comfortable/predictable—and safe as a friendship.

Bob: Okay; but one night, it became something more than that.

Barbara: Yes.

Dennis: Yes. And this sounds like it’s an assorted affair or something. What took place—

Barbara: Yes, it does.

Dennis: —was so harmless—that some of our listeners would go: “He did what?!! She said what?!"
Bob: You’re walking across a mall parking lot, and Dennis took your hand.

Barbara: He did—he did. We were walking—it was nine o’clock at night. The stores were closed. We were looking in the windows, and—

Dennis: The sun was going down—a little soft June breeze.

Barbara: Yes; it was June too.

Dennis: It was.

Barbara: And he reached over, and he took my hand. I thought: “Uh-oh! This isn’t a move friends make with friends. So, what am I going to do about this?” I thought about it for about 60 seconds. I thought, “I really like him as my friend, and I don’t want to mess up this friendship.” I thought, “If I tell him I don’t like him holding my hand, he’s going to think I’m crazy!” Then, I thought: “If he thinks I’m crazy, I don’t really care because I don’t want to mess up the friendship. It’s not worth it if he doesn’t respect what I think.”

Bob: Wow!

Barbara: So, I took a deep breath—

Bob: Your heart did not melt instantly when he took your hand?

Barbara: No! [Laughter] The facial expression doesn’t show on the radio; does it?

Dennis: It doesn’t show on the radio.

Bob: Oh, we could see the facial expression with that “No!”

Dennis: Let me describe this for the listeners. Her face was wrinkled with disgust, like she’d just eaten a sour grape/—

Bob: Okay, so—

Dennis: —a persimmon.

Bob: So, did you pull your hand away?

Barbara: No; I just said, “Why did you do that?”

Bob: And what did you say?
Barbara: I didn’t pull away; and I didn’t ask him to stop holding it. I just asked him why he did that because it was like: “We’re really good friends. Friends don’t hold hands. So, why did you hold my hand?”

Dennis: And so, being the man of God that I was, and ready for a DTR—

Bob: Yes.

Dennis: —for those of you who don’t know what a DTR is—that’s “Define the Relationship”—I was stunned—I did not know what to say!

Bob: Was this the first time—

Dennis: I said nothing.

Bob: —your move had been rejected by a young woman like this?

Dennis: You know, I didn’t have an answer for her question,—

Bob: Yes.

Dennis: —at least, at that moment.

Bob: Okay.

Dennis: So, I dropped her hand right there in the parking lot.

Bob: Yes? This is awkward—talk about an awkward evening.

Dennis: Yes.

Barbara: It was—yes, it was awkward. It was really awkward.

Dennis: We continued, over 55 days, for me to show her around town—how to get around town because she still needed help—52 out of those 55 days.

Bob: So, if that had been me with her and she said, “What’s that all about?” and I pull my hand back and I don’t know, I’d have been kind of scared to make another—I’d have just said, “I guess she doesn’t like me.”

Dennis: You know, I think that would have been contemplating that it was some kind of calculated move on my part—and truthfully, we were just walking across the parking lot. It was kind of—

Bob: It was an impulse.
**Dennis:** It was. It was a nice romantic evening. I just kind of reached over to hold her hand. You know, I wasn’t trying to put a move on her or anything—it was just a gesture. So, when she pushed back, it was like: “Well, you know what? I like her. I respect her. I am going to honor her wishes.”

**Bob:** Okay.

**Dennis:** At which point, I didn’t hold her hand until we were virtually engaged.

**Bob:** So, how did the subject even come up again? How did you guys go from that awkward parking lot experience to starting to contemplate, “Maybe there is something here”?

**Barbara:** Well, we just continued to hang out, which was just fine with me. He seemed to be happy with it too. So, we just did. He continued to pick me up—we went to the office. We went through the conference. We spent a lot of time together. I mean, we ate all of our meals together. He’d come over to the apartment, where I was living, in the evenings. We spent weekends together. We just—

**Dennis:** Well, I’d stay—

**Barbara:** —we were together a lot.

**Dennis:** —at her apartment. We’d sit out on the steps and talk at night until 2. I mean, it was just one of those deals where we couldn’t get enough of each other—and getting to know each other, and what was going on, and talking about life together, and about what we were learning about Jesus Christ and the mission we were on. We were all about 100,000 high school students, college students, and laymen, from all over the United States, coming to the Cotton Bowl. Then, close to a million hearing Johnny Cash and Billy Graham in a major kind of a festival kind of experience. So, we were into the moment; and we were on a mission, as a couple.

**Bob:** But in the midst of that, your feelings for one another began to develop.

**Barbara:** No. [Laughter] That wasn’t the answer you were expecting; was it?

**Dennis:** You’re now getting a picture of how our marriage started, Bob. We were well into our marriage before the feelings—

**Barbara:** That’s not true! [Laughter] That’s not true. No, what grew was respect—
Bob: Right.

Barbara: —because I got to know him—he got to know me. My respect and admiration for him, as a person, and his values and his standards continued to grow—I assume it was mutual with me—because we got to know each other without all the baggage that comes with the physical involvement in a guy/girl relationship.

Bob: So, Barbara, when did you start to have feelings for Dennis?

Barbara: I didn’t start having feelings for him until we were talking marriage. The reason is because I was thinking this was going to take a long time. We were having fun together. We were talking about me coming to visit him at Thanksgiving and doing some things together in six months because I was living in South Carolina and he was living in Denver. So, we were talking about plans for spending more time together.

And then, in late July that summer, we were both in mutual friends’ weddings. I was a bridesmaid / he was a groomsman. We were both in this wedding that was in the evening. That afternoon, before the wedding, a good friend of ours, named Don Meredith—who was our director when we were students on campus—and his wife Sally were at the wedding.

Don said to Dennis, “I’d like to sit down and meet with you and Barbara and have a conversation.” Dennis must have said, “Yes,” because the next thing I know he’s picking me up and we’re driving to Don’s hotel room. We went in to have a conversation with Don.

Dennis: And we should say that Don’s wife, Sally, is the woman who had led Barbara to Christ when Barbara was a sophomore at the University of Arkansas.

Barbara: That’s right.

Bob: And that conversation was about what?

Barbara: So, we showed up at the hotel room. We went in and sat down in the two little dinky chairs in this dark, dimly-lit hotel room. Don sat on the bed. He promptly said, at the very beginning—he said, “Well, you two sure have been spending a lot of time together, and people are talking.” He said, “I think you are both old enough and mature enough that you need to decide whether or not it’s God’s will for you to be married or not.” I absolutely could have gone through the floor. I was speechless—I was shocked!

Bob: Did you think this was a setup? Did you think—
Barbara: No, I didn’t think it was a setup! But I just—I’d never, in a million years, expected that to come out of his mouth. Now, if I had thought about it, I probably could have figured it out; but I didn’t think about it.

Dennis: We were not dating.

Barbara: No, we were not dating.

Dennis: We were not dating in defined terms—

Barbara: Right, where—

Dennis: —where two people have sat down and gone, “You’re mine. I’m yours.”

Barbara: “We’re boyfriend/girlfriend,”—right—“There’s nobody else.”

Dennis: It was all back to the parking lot in Northpark Shopping Center—Dallas, Texas. This is a friendship that is being fully developed.

Bob: So, were you, as he said this—and Barbara could have fallen through the floor—were you going: “Way to go, Don—alright—about time!”?

Dennis: You know, I don’t remember thinking that; but I remember it being a little bit like a challenge. That may sound kind of strange to our listeners; but I remember it being, “You know, I think he’s right.” I didn’t say, “Yes, way to go!” or anything like that. What I had no way of anticipating was how quickly the ball would start rolling as a result of that challenge being laid out and how fast this whole idea would pick up steam.

Bob: So, how far from that conversation in July, in a hotel room on a Saturday, until the proposal?

Barbara: Days.

Bob: Days?

Barbara: Days. We decided—so, we sat and listened to his little speech about marriage, and God’s will, and all that stuff. We left; and we went and got ready for the wedding—did the wedding / did the reception. Afterwards, we got in a car and talked.

Dennis: I’m a decisive man, Bob. What else can you say?

Barbara: He is. And we talked for about two or three hours—probably midnight or after—I don’t know. We talked about it. We decided, that night, that what Don said made sense. Well: “Yes, obviously, either it is or isn’t God’s will. God doesn’t give you multiple choices. He has a will / He has a plan. He has something that He’s trying to
accomplish in your life.” Yes, it—and after I got over the shock, it made sense: “Yes, God has a plan. Either Dennis is what God has for me or he’s not.” It made sense to go ahead and decide. “If he’s not God’s will, then, we shouldn’t be spending so much time together.”

Bob: So, within days, he says—

Barbara: Within days.

Bob: —“Will you marry me?”

Barbara: That’s correct.

Bob: And what did you say?

Barbara: I said, “Yes,” because I had prayed—we decided we were going to pray about it for a week. It didn’t take me a week. It took me about two-and-a-half—maybe two days—didn’t take that long because I just prayed and I said: “Alright, God; You have a will. If this is your will for me to marry Dennis, then, I need You to show me because when he calls and asks, I need an answer.”

Dennis: Ours was not a romantic relationship.

Barbara: —at the beginning.

Dennis: Yes, at the beginning. [Laughter] Well said, my dear.

Bob: And there was a wink that went with that, by the way.

Dennis: There was a wink and a little—yes, whatever—but you know, truthfully, feelings—and we say this at the Weekend to Remember® marriage getaway—feelings are not a good foundation. They are the quicksand of a relationship because they come and go. So: “Had we enjoyed each other as friends?” Yes. “Had we had a great time together?” Absolutely; I mean, that’s how we ended up where we were.

And yet, when it came time to look at marriage, it was not a decision based upon emotions. It was a decision based upon two individuals, who were contemplating: “What does God want? What is He up to? Is He bringing us more together or moving us more apart? Are there any counselors in our lives who would advise us against this relationship?”—there were none. So, it was like: “Wow! Yes.” And so, I call her up at 2am—

Barbara: My time.
**Dennis:** —her time in South Carolina. She says, “Yes.” I wired a dozen roses that arrive the next morning—make sure she wasn't asleep when she said, “Yes.” And we were married six weeks later.

**Barbara:** Now, people look at us when we tell this story like we must be from another planet; but once the subject was broached—that night that Dennis and I stayed up and talked—I think we started having feelings for each other then. The next morning, we went to church. Before I flew out, he handed me this little note, folded up in the envelope that you get—

**Bob:** You put the offering in?

**Barbara:** —the little offering envelope. He said, “Don’t open it until you’re on the plane.”

**Dennis:** Is that stealing?

**Bob:** I think you’re excused. [Laughter]

**Barbara:** And so, I waited until I got up and I was looking, out the window, at the clouds. I opened the little envelope. It said, “I love you.” It was like, “Oh, really?” You know—so, it—even though it sounds very factual—and it was—it was very faith-based. Once we entertained the idea that this was of God, the feelings came.

**Bob:** I’m trying to figure out what lessons people can learn from this chapter of your life—that our broadly applicable other than the fact that—again, when Christ is at the center of what you are doing—

**Dennis:** There you go.

**Bob:** —when your chief goal is to please Him, then, really, at that point, marriage/family—how it’s all going to come together—that’s going to work if He’s at the center of it.

**Dennis:** If you’ve got two people—a man and a woman—who are sold out to Jesus Christ—they have settled the issue of who the Master is / who owns their lives—secondly, they know where they are headed and are committed to Him in going there—and I’m not saying you have to be in the ministry to determine that. I think there are a lot of people God calls to be in business, and to be in education, and lots of vocations. I think if you’ve settled the issue of Master and mission—then, it goes a long ways to helping solidify the last “M”—which is your mate.

**Bob:** Well, we’ve got 30 seconds for you to talk about the resources you’ve been working on here, Barbara, with Ever Thine Home®. What do you want to say?
Barbara: I need to talk really fast. [Laughter] I want to say that I would love for you to go online and look at what we’ve been developing because I’m creating things that will help moms and dads share their faith at home with their kids. If you go online, you can sign up to have a catalogue. If you’d like a hard-copy catalogue, you can sign up; and we’ll send you one in the mail—or you can just browse your way through the website.

Bob: And there are resources for Valentine’s Day. There are resources for Lent—

Barbara: Correct.

Bob: —for Easter. Not everything is seasonal. Some things—

Barbara: That’s right.

Bob: —are there for year-round use. They really are beautiful resources. You can find out more when you go to Barbara’s website, which is EverThineHome.com. Again, go directly to EverThineHome.com. You can order resources from her, online; or if you have any questions about the resources you see there, call 1-800-FL-TODAY—1-800-358-6329—that’s 1-800- “F” as in family, “L” as in life, and then, the word, “TODAY.”

You know, I’m always encouraged when I get a chance to talk to a regular FamilyLife Today listener—whether I’m out at one of our events or just travelling and run into somebody, who is a regular listener. It’s always encouraging to hear how God is using this ministry to help people think practically and biblically about how your faith integrates into your marriage and into your family. That’s our goal—we want to effectively develop godly families because we believe godly marriages / godly families change the world, one home at a time.

And we appreciate those of you who are partners with us in this ministry—who help support us / help cover the cost of producing and syndicating this daily radio program, which is now heard by more people in more places around the world than ever before—thanks to digital technology—our website / our My FamilyLife app that’s available—that give you instant access to our radio program. We appreciate those of you who partner with us in this ministry.

In fact, right now, if you are able to help with a donation, we’d like to say a tangible “Thank you,” by sending you a copy of a book by Dennis and Barbara Rainey that is a devotional book for couples. It’s designed to be read together each day. There’s a Scripture verse, a brief devotional, some questions for conversation, and then, an opportunity to pray together, as a couple.

The book is called Moments with You. It’s our thank-you gift when you go, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com. Click the link in the upper right-hand corner that says, “I CARE,” and make an online donation. Or call 1-800-FL-TODAY. Make your donation over the phone and request the book, Moments with You. Or you can request the book and mail
a donation to us at FamilyLife Today,—PO Box 7111, Little Rock, AR; and our zip code is 72223.

And we hope you can join us back tomorrow when we’re going to hear about the early months of marriage for Dennis and Barbara Rainey—about the adjustments that Barbara had to make when she moved from being a young single woman to being a young bride. I hope you can tune in for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, along with 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.

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