FamilyLife Today® Radio Transcript

Don’t Freak Out

Guests: Adam Barr and Ron Citlau
From the series: Compassion without Compromise (Day 3 of 3)
Air date: May 6, 2015

Bob: As our culture moves farther and farther away from a biblically-informed understanding of life—when you are engaged in conversations with people who don’t have a biblical worldview, do you find yourself getting angry or maybe fearful? Ron Citlau says, “We don’t need to be either.”

Ron: The reason we can go in and be joy-filled presences, without anxiety, is because Jesus is making a way through all of these tangled webs of governments, and people, and sin, and darkness, and demons. He is using it for His glory and our good. So, I can be there and I can be a friend to a person who I disagree with, who is in sin, and I can love them / be their friend, knowing that God is going to use this for their good / my good—His fame.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Wednesday, May 6th. Our host is the President of FamilyLife®, Dennis Rainey, and I’m Bob Lepine. We’ll talk today about how we can hold fast to truth with confidence, with grace, and with joy. Stay tuned.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us. You know, I don’t think most of us have had good practice being a part of a minority; but when it comes to the issue of human sexuality, as Christians, we better get good at this because that’s where we live in our culture today.

Dennis: It is, Bob. And I think, being a follower of Christ today, we are in a minority—

Bob: Yes.

Dennis: —and we better know how to relate to a world that doesn’t believe, doesn’t think, doesn’t act like we do and be able to do it in a winsome way so we can engage the world with the greatest news it’ll ever hear because it needs hope and help to get out of the rut that it’s in and find Jesus Christ.

And we’ve got a couple of guys, here, who have been with us this week—talking about same-sex attraction and how we should relate to friends, family members—maybe, coworkers—who find themselves in this situation. Adam Barr and Ron Citlau join us again on the broadcast. Ron/Adam, welcome back.
Adam: Thanks. It’s great to be here.

Ron: Thank you so much.

Dennis: We have apologized for these guys being pastors, seminary grads, authors—[Laughter]

Bob: I don't know why you’re beating up on pastors this week.

Dennis: —and fathers.

Bob: What’s the deal?

Dennis: I’m kind of being tough on them.

Adam: Jesus loves pastors! [Laughter]

Dennis: They’re both good guys—they can take it—but they’ve written a book called Compassion without Compromise. They are coaching us in how to engage our world—like you’re talking about, Bob, being a minority—but do it in a winsome way that gives the gospel a chance to be heard.

Bob: Well, I’ve got to jump right in here because I read an article, online, a while back, and was interested in the author’s suggestion—actually, two articles. The first one was the question of: “A friend of mine is getting married to his same-sex partner, and I’m invited to the wedding,”—or maybe, it’s—“Our son is getting married, and I’m invited to the wedding / we’re invited to the wedding. What do we do?” Now, I think we should preface this by saying there is probably not a definitive biblical answer here; right? But coach us because we are getting invited to these weddings, and it’s going to be increasing. As Christians, do we go if it’s our child? What do we do? What’s your suggestion, Ron?

Ron: I’ve had to deal with this with a significant person in my life—very close to me. The first thing we just have to acknowledge is—for those of us who follow Jesus—how heart-wrenching this is—because you want to talk about making something more complicated and painful—they are now making legal this union that we know is contrary to the gospel of Jesus.

Dennis: And before you go further, just explain your unique perspective of this—with you coming out of a homosexual lifestyle.

Ron: Right. So, I’m someone who understands what it means to have these contrary attractions and have met Jesus and been profoundly touched by the gospel of mercy and His cross. And so, there is this mourning—so, you have somebody that you love,
getting into a union that we feel to be contrary to the gospel of Jesus—we mourn. We ought to mourn. If that isn't where we are at, then, we need to do some soul-searching.

Then, we really have to weigh two things. One, we are called to stand for the gospel of Jesus. We have to weigh that against—we are called to be in relationship with people, who are sinners. I do think people, who follow Jesus, can—on that spectrum—find themselves in different places, to whether or not they would go to a gay wedding.

But you want to talk about the rubber hitting the road—this is going to be one of those places it happens.

**Dennis:** So, what did you do?

**Ron:** I did not go to the ceremony, but I said I would go to the reception because I think Jesus is the kind of person who goes to parties with sinners.

**Bob:** And I remember reading in this article. The person said, “I couldn’t go to the wedding because it’s a worship service—

**Adam:** That’s right.

**Bob:** —“and I can’t participate in a worship service.”

Now, by the same token, I’ve talked to parents, who said: “I knew that to not go was going to be a definitive break with a son or a daughter. We would lose—

**Ron:** That’s right.

**Bob:** —“any relationship. So, in the same way that I would go to a Muslim service, with my Muslim friend, and just be there, as an observer, our son or daughter knows where we are. We don’t think God is blessing this union, but we’re going there because: ‘We’re here with you because we love you and support you.’”

It really is one of these continuum issues—you have to use wisdom; don’t you?

**Adam:** Well, you started the show by talking about—kind of the culture we’re in. We have to understand we’re living in a post-Christian culture. We don’t hold the stage any longer.

In many ways, you go back to the very first century of Christianity and say, “But we’re dealing with a lot of the very same things they were dealing with.” If you read in the New Testament experience, you realize it was often at these very kinds of ground-level, human-interaction experiences that we have to face the questions of what we are going to compromise, or not, on the gospel. Even first century Christians, when they would go to another person’s house, would have to sometimes make a decision, when you walk
in the door, “Am I going to put a little bit of incense in the altar to burn to the gods?” A Christian couldn’t do that!

**Bob:** Right.

**Adam:** And you had to be prepared for the consequences. I think we’re going to have to get used to the reality that, at different points, we are going to have to, for the sake of relationship—we’re going to have to deal with tough issues; but also, be prepared for those moments when standing for the gospel might mean facing a difficult relational conversation.

**Dennis:** So, what about you, Adam? Ron said he split the difference and went to the reception.

**Adam:** Well, I think Ron exercised a lot of wisdom in a situation that was personal to him. In the book, we said—and I think we both agree—that, in general, the idea of celebrating a service of worship that, in the eyes of God, is supposed to be the union of two people—that is so profoundly at odds with God’s Word—would be a mistake for a Christian.

**Dennis:** And I think, too, there is even a way in how you go about that, where I don’t know that you would need to wave a flag,—

**Ron:** Right. I agree.

**Dennis:** —saying: “I’m not going to the wedding. I’m drawing a line in the sand”; instead, you just go to the reception. If that fits within your conscience of what you’re able to do before God, you’ve communicated to them that you care about them.

**Bob:** And I’ll counterbalance this with the person who will say: “Well, you know, when my Jewish friend invited me to come to his son’s wedding, I went to his son’s wedding, even though I don’t believe he’s worshipping the same God I worship. And when my Mormon friend invited me to come to his son’s wedding, I went there, even though I think they have Jesus wrong.”

**Adam:** The only difference I would say that presents itself there is that—if we are talking about the union of a man and a woman—

**Bob:** Right.

**Adam:** —we’re talking about something that God instituted at creation.

**Bob:** Right.
Adam: So, we’re talking about something that’s blessed by God, from the beginning of creation. So, —

Bob: In every setting.

Adam: —in every setting / in every context,—

Bob: Even when it happens at the courthouse with the justice of the peace.

Adam: —even when it happens at the courthouse with the justice of the peace. We’re talking about a human institution that was created and blessed by God, whether it’s done by a Christian pastor, or a Jewish rabbi, or a justice of the peace.

Bob: Or Elvis at the wedding chapel in Las Vegas.

Adam: [Laughter] I don’t know about that! [Laughter] I might have to draw a line right there.

Ron: The only thing I’d add to this—and Adam is right on—is that we don’t have to be afraid that Jesus can’t stand up to the obstacles that are facing us in the culture. He actually is the smartest man who has ever lived—

Bob: Yes.

Ron: —and the reason we can go in and be joy-filled presences, without anxiety, is because Jesus is making a way through all of these tangled webs of governments, and people, and sin, and darkness, and demons. He’s using it for His glory and our good. So, I can be there; and I can be a friend to a person, who I disagree with, who is in sin, and I can love them / be their friend, knowing that God is going to use this for their good/my good—His fame.

Dennis: Okay.

Ron: And I believe that.

Dennis: That is a great answer. I want to switch subjects. I want you to speak to the mom and dad, who are suspicious that their teenage son—maybe, it’s a teenage daughter—is going through a time of questioning their sexual identity—maybe, they think they are transgender / maybe, they think they are bisexual/homosexual. What would you coach that mom / that dad to do as they finish up their teenage years with their child?

Bob: Should you be proactive in these conversations with your kids? Because I’m thinking a lot parents have no idea that their 15-year-old is wondering: “I wonder if I’m
bi-,” “I wonder if I’m gay.” And it’s just never coming up at the dinner table, certainly; right?

Ron: About a year-and-a-half ago, I had a conversation with a family, who their young daughter—15/16 years old—was wondering if she was a lesbian. They didn’t know what to do—this was so outside of their comfort range. The dad didn’t know what to say. The mom didn’t know if she should come in closer.

What I told them—and this is true—is that the voice of the parents are so powerful that, even if you jumble your words, you need to speak the profound truth that you know to be true to your kids. And this is especially true for fathers. Fathers have the unique authority to speak to their kids and to call them out of the chaos into adulthood. This is true for sexual brokenness / this is true for immaturity, at large. The lack of a father’s voice in our kids is one of the big cultural problems today—manifested, in one way, through homosexuality.

Dennis: And I would just add to that—to speak that truth powerfully but do it, as the Scripture says, “Speaking the truth in love.”

Ron: Amen to that.

Dennis: Wrap it in a relationship.

Adam: Invite them into a conversation—don’t lecture! I think that’s one of the most important things you can do. If they understand—I mean, all of us want to be understood by someone. We know the difference between someone coming to us and saying: “I’m worried about something; and if I get the wrong answer, the relationship is over,” versus a conversation of: “I love you so much. I want to know if you’ve been going through an internal struggle that you’ve been afraid to talk with us about because we want you to know it is okay to talk with us. We’re going to love you no matter what you say.”

Bob: We have to—as parents—that one side of the continuum is—we freak out.

Adam: Right!

Bob: Right? The other side of the continuum is—it’s like we either aren’t there or we’re just so casual about it that the child thinks, “I guess—

Adam: “It’s no big deal.”

Dennis: Or Bob, we’re so afraid—back to a point that Ron made earlier about how we’re insecure—

Bob: Yes.
Dennis: —we’re insecure about engaging in the conversation—so, we say nothing.

Adam: Well, the earliest title for this book was Don’t Freak Out. The editors wisely changed the title. But that’s—I wanted to call the book Don’t Freak Out because that was exactly the point—was that parents shouldn’t freak out. Family members/loved ones shouldn’t freak out when we’re talking with someone—that non-anxious presence is key.

Dennis: I’m thinking of just engaging in the conversation though, Ron. Is the conversation as simple as asking God for a teachable moment with your child? Maybe, it’s late at night, when they throw themselves across the foot of your bed, and they open up about their day and seems like the conversation is flowing. Do you come straight forward with the questions: “Have you ever—we’re hearing a lot on the news about people struggling with this. How are you doing, as a teenager?”

Ron: I would frame it softer but very closely to what you are saying. I would say something to the effect of: “You know we’re hearing a lot about this in the news. If you ever feel like you’re struggling, or if you are struggling, I want you to know that your mom and dad are a place that is safe,—

Dennis: Yes.

Ron: —“loving, and kind, where you can come; and we will be with you in it.” And you hug them, you love them, and you pray for them. Then, you give them the many opportunities to come. And you just never know, in an adolescent, what’s going on. They might be acting tough and disengage; but every word, they’re hanging on—I can promise you.

Bob: Well, you’ve got to keep in mind, I think, as parents—if you are having conversations, around the dinner table, that are just casual—where you are saying: “Oh, man! Did you read the news today? I mean, another state just went same-sex marriage. We are—this is Romans 1. We are moving down—I mean, civilization is collapsing; and the gay rights movement is this…” Your 14-year-old is sitting over there, going: “Okay, I see what Mom and Dad think about this. I can never tell them what I’m thinking or feeling because—

Dennis: This would be like pulling a pin in a grenade.

Bob: Right. So, we’ve got to be careful, not just about the specific conversations we might have on this, but we’ve got to be careful about the compassion we evidence on this issue, in front of our kids.

Ron: And we have to—with our particular sins and weaknesses—have language for it that we can articulate to our children—to say: “You know what, Jack? I deal with
anger—sometimes, I blow up; and I’ve had to work that out.” That should be some of the common language in the family—

**Bob:** Right.

**Ron:** —so that they can get that same language for the areas in which they are broken, and they need Jesus.

**Dennis:** That’s back to that word you used earlier, “compassion,”—

**Adam:** Yes.

**Dennis:** —where you are looking someone in the eye, and you are going: “I’m broken / you’re broken. Let me share with you how I’m embracing Christ in my journey in the midst of my failures; and maybe, you’ll share, in return, how you’re struggling as well.”

**Adam:** Sure. You can look at a lot of issues that have arisen in parenting over the last few decades—and loss of respect—all of those sorts of things. But one really good thing that’s happened is that parents understand that they have to have a relationship with their child and that they have to be someone who is not just simply seen to be the authority figure—who has everything put together.

I think the way that Ron put it out / said it is perfect: “If your kids have never heard you say, ‘Hey, I’m really sorry,’ or ‘Boy, I really messed that up,’ then, they’re going to be living in an atmosphere that’s plastic—it’s not real and organic,—

**Dennis:** Yes.

**Adam:** —where redemption can happen.

**Dennis:** I couldn’t agree more. I want to go back to something Bob said earlier. This conversation, at this point—later on, with a 13-, 14-, 15-, 16-year-old teenager, or maybe a young adult—maybe, they are in adulthood / college or beyond—ought to be the result of a continuing conversation that started, early on, with that child. Bob, you mentioned earlier about doing something preemptive.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Dennis:** And we’ve created a couple of resources, here at FamilyLife, that I’m going to tell you—I think these are—they have never been more important for parents to use than they are today. One of them is *Passport2Purity*® which is a Friday night/Saturday getaway that the parent puts on—same-sex parent puts on—the mother/daughter or father/son—puts on. They play these CDs; and they hear about the birds and the bees / they hear about pornography. They hear about these issues and have a chance to
crack it open, and discuss it, and start a dialogue with a 10-, 11-, 12-year-old that can continue on into adolescence.

And we’re just finishing up another one called Passport2Identity™. It’s designed around helping a young person find their spiritual identity, their gender identity, their relational identity—who they are, as a young person.

**Bob:** “What is their mission in life?”—to know what God’s calling them to. It really does unpack: “Who am I? What’s God made me to do and to be? How can I be pointed in that direction?”

So, if folks are interested in Passport2Purity, they can go to our website, FamilyLifeToday.com, and click the link at the top of the page that says, “GO DEEPER.” They’ll find information about it there, and we’ll have information about Passport2Identity as soon as it’s available.

**Dennis:** I want to go to another question that, again, a lot of parents would like to have an answer to—and that is—your child comes to you and says: “Mom/Dad, I’m gay,” “…I’m transgender.” We’ve already mentioned they shouldn’t freak out. What should they do?

**Ron:** I think, first of all, in that initial encounter—you hug, you love, you pray. Then, you take space. So, you get away. You get around wise people who, hopefully, you’ve already dug the well of relationship with—and you mourn with them. I think the worst thing you can do is mourn in front of your child in a way that shows that, all of a sudden, the family system is so shaken that Mom and Dad don’t know what’s going on.

**Bob:** Show shame.

**Ron:** Right.

**Bob:** Really, that’s what—if you’re mourning, you’re saying, “You have made me profoundly ashamed/sad.” It’s—I mean, I think you can weep in love.

**Ron:** Yes.

**Bob:** There is a difference between that—

**Ron:** Absolutely.

**Bob:** —and the kind of weeping that is like, “You’ve just wrecked my world!”

**Dennis:** But if you think about it for a moment, a lot of parents—and you said it earlier, Ron—a lot of parents are going to feel like they’ve failed. That’s not the place to express it—
Bob: Right.

Dennis: —because whether or not you failed is not the issue, at this point. It’s what’s taking place in that young person’s life, as they’ve been vulnerable.

Adam: If the first thing your kid feels is “I’ve just wrecked Mom and Dad’s life,” then, you are in trouble.

Bob: Right.

Adam: You, first and foremost, need to show compassion and empathy that they’ve been struggling with something really deeply. They need to immediately know that you are really glad that they came to you with that.

Ron: And the only other thing I would add is—the more adult they are—the more that, in the subsequent conversations, you need to offer them pathways.

Adam: Right.

Ron: You need to say: “You know what? As a follower of Jesus, this is what we believe about sexuality, about purity, about holiness.” The younger they are, the more it is a partnership and a journey together. I think that’s important.

Bob: This is not the unpardonable or disqualifying sin.

Ron: Amen.

Adam: Precisely.

Bob: It is a struggle: “Yours looks like this and mine looks like that. And let’s struggle together”; right?

Dennis: And we all struggle. And I just want you guys to know I’m really proud of you—for the book you’ve written here. This is a great service to the Christian community, and I think you’ve helped a lot of parents today. I think you’ve helped some folks, who are struggling with same-sex attraction, as well. I look forward to having you guys back on the broadcast again someday.

Ron: Thank you so much.

Adam: Thank you. It’s been a blessing and honor.

Bob: You know, every mom and dad has to recognize we are going to be having these conversations. We better think clearly about how we’re going to engage on this subject
with our children, with other parents, with folks in the office building, or folks at church. That’s one of the reasons why we are grateful for what you guys have done in the book that you’ve written called *Compassion without Compromise*.

Our listeners can order a copy if they’d like—go to FamilyLifeToday.com to request your copy of Adam Barr and Ron Citlau’s book, *Compassion without Compromise*. Again, our website is FamilyLifeToday.com. We also have links to articles and past broadcasts on this subject—other resources that are available. Again, go to FamilyLifeToday.com and click the link that says, “GO DEEPER,” for more information about the resources we have; or 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 hope that folks, who are regular listeners to our program, would be able to say that, as they listen to *FamilyLife Today*, week in and week out, that the program is helpful. I hope we are helping you think more clearly, more biblically, more carefully about the issues that you face in your marriage and in your family.

I think, Dennis, some of the most encouraging comments we get from people are the comments, where people tell us: “Your program has been used by God to mentor me to know how to be a better mom,” “…a better dad,” “…a better husband,” or “…better wife.” Our goal, here at *FamilyLife Today*, is provide that kind of practical biblical help. And we need to thank a group of people who help us make all of that possible, and that would be the folks who support this ministry with financial contributions. We are listener-supported. We could not do what we do without help from folks, like you.

During the month of May, there is a special opportunity for listeners to double the impact of their giving, thanks to a matching-gift fund that has been established by some friends of the ministry. They have agreed that they will match every donation we receive, this month, dollar for dollar, up to a total of $300,000. Of course, we are hoping we will be able to take full advantage of that matching-gift opportunity. So, we want to ask our listeners: “If God has used *FamilyLife Today* to help you—as a mom, as a dad, as a husband, as a wife—would you consider helping us with a donation, right now, knowing that the impact of your donation will be doubled because of this matching-gift opportunity?”

Go to FamilyLifeToday.com. Click the link in the upper right-hand corner of the screen that says, “I CARE,” and make an online donation. Or call 1-800-FL-TODAY. Make your donation over the phone. Or if you’d prefer, you can mail a donation to *FamilyLife Today* at PO Box 7111, Little Rock, AR; and our zip code is 72223. Again, any donation you make is going to be matched, dollar for dollar. And so, we’re grateful for whatever you can do today.

And we hope you can join us back tomorrow. Leslie Fields is going to be here, and we’re going to talk about what happened in her family when she found out that she was
expecting a child in her mid-forties. It was an unexpected and unplanned pregnancy. We'll talk to her tomorrow. Hope you can tune in for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Justin Adams, along with 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.

We are so happy to provide these transcripts to you. However, there is a cost to produce them for our website. If you’ve benefited from the broadcast transcripts, would you consider donating today to help defray the costs?

Copyright © 2015 FamilyLife. All rights reserved.

www.FamilyLife.com