Bob: One of the conversations that parents of teenagers need to be having is about the appropriate or inappropriate use of the phrase, “I love you.” Here’s Daniel Anderson with his daughter, Jacquelyn Meza.

Daniel: I think one of the passports to sex—and young men learn this quickly—is if you say, “I love you.” When a young man says, “I love you,” to a young woman, he’s saying something entirely different than she is saying to him.

Jacquelyn: The rapid timeline for saying, “I love you,” is really alarming. You hear kids that have been dating for two weeks saying, “I love you.” Kids that aren’t even dating say, “I love you,”—it just gets thrown around. This idea of this biblical, deep, committed love is just not really present in the culture anymore.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Wednesday, April 25th. Our host is Dennis Rainey; I’m Bob Lepine. There are a lot of regular conversations moms and dads ought to be having with their teenagers about love, and dating, and sex. We’ll talk about some of those today. Stay with us.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us.

Dennis: Bob, I want to have kind of a broadcast that has “Dueling Daughter and Daddy” around the myths around dating.

Bob: “Dueling Daughter and Daddy.”

Dennis: Yes; we’re just going to commit the entire broadcast—give each of them six minutes per myth. [Laughter] Can we do that?

Bob: So this is like a boxing match, and you each have your rounds; you got it?

Jacquelyn: Got it; got it; got it.
Dennis: Well, they both need to comment on these myths; because they co-authored the book, *The 10 Myths of Teen Dating*. Daniel Anderson and his daughter, Jacque Meza, join us on *FamilyLife Today*. Welcome back, guys; it's been great to have you here this week.

Daniel: Thank you. We're humbled and honored. We're really, really having a great time. We appreciate the support, and we're just thrilled to be here.

Dennis: Both are schoolteachers in the public school system in Portland, and they've had a good opportunity to look at teenagers and how they handle dating.

Bob: Yes; you have your own back story on this as well. You've brought some of that into the book; because, as you look back on your teenage years, Jacque, you would say, “This book is really mistakes we made more than victories we had”; right?

Jacquelyn: I think you learn a lot from failure, and failure’s a great opportunity for growth. We’ve chalked up some losses in our time as father/daughter.

Dennis: Okay; we’re going to you first. I just hit the button—you’re up, Jacque. Which one of these ten myths would you like to pick as one you want to encourage parents to understand?

Jacquelyn: “Teenagers see sex”—especially if they’re in a relationship—“as kind of a logical progression of intimacy,”—obviously. They think: “You know what? Sex—if we have sex, it’s going to make our relationship so much better. There’s going to be sparkles in the sky and fireworks. We’re just going to be so close, and intimate, and amazing, and engaged.”

*But* what we know is—that’s not really the case. This is hard to talk about for parents, I think, because it’s hard to see your kid or your daughter as a sexual being; but at the end of the day, they are. That’s what God created them to be.

There are a lot of reasons why girls want to have sex, especially as teenagers—it does provide closeness. For teenage girls, they *think* that the feelings that they’re feeling about sex are being *reciprocated* in their teenage boy partner; but that’s not true.

Bob: And by the way, we should mention here your book, *The 10 Myths of Teen Dating*—this is written for parents of daughters. You’re dealing with how young women process the whole dating scene, not so much how young men do it. It overlaps, but you’re looking at this from the perspective of what’s going on with teen daughters. Teen daughters are thinking, “If I say, ‘Yes,’ to my boyfriend, who is pressuring me, it will make things better in our relationship.”

Jacquelyn: —“a hundred percent.” What they’re thinking is: “It’s going to take our relationship to the next level,” and “It’s going to bring us to a depth of emotional
closeness that we’ve never been before.” That may be true for the girl, but it’s most certainly *not true* for the boy.

**Bob:** Are they thinking, “If I have sex with him, I’ll probably marry him”?

**Jacquelyn:** Yes; I think so. I think there’s some—or “He’ll, at least, stay with me,” or “This will make him committed to me,” or “This will make him fall so deeply in love with me that he’s never going to leave me.”

**Dennis:** What about this, Dad? I mean, you’re a schoolteacher, you’re watching this play its way out, day after day.

**Daniel:** Yes.

**Dennis:** It doesn’t work; does it?

**Daniel:** No; absolutely not. The average teenage boy, emotionally, is so far behind the average teenage girl. There’s no reciprocation of those emotions.

**Bob:** I’m going to eat into some of your clock time here. Can we pause the timer so that I can eat into this for a minute?

**Dennis:** No. [Laughter]

**Bob:** So, when I was a Cub Scout, I was nine or ten years old on the way to a Cub Scout fishing trip. My dad went through the birds and the bees with me; in part, using language that I didn’t understand what he was talking about—talking about body parts / I’d never heard these words before. I couldn’t even imagine or visualize what he’s talking about—it was pretty abstract; I was kind of bored.

What I *didn’t* hear from him—and what I got no input on—was: “Here’s how a young man should treat a young woman...” “Here’s what a healthy relationship should look like...” “Here’s what respecting a girl/teenage girl should look like...” All I learned about that I learned from my peers. What I learned was, “When you start, you go to first base; and then you go to second base.” I’m not trying to get crude here; but if a relationship—you’re trying to get a run on the board, you know? You’re trying to *score* here. I’m—again, not trying to be crass—but that was the sense of what I had.

We’re talking to dads and daughters, but dads of sons—[Ringing] Oh, there’s the alarm! See, I did—I took up all the rest of your time. [Laughter] Dads of sons need to be coaching their sons about what it looks like to respect a young—[Ringing continues]—I guess I have to quit; okay? [Laughter]

**Jacquelyn:** Yes.
Bob: Alright; I’m done.

Jacquelyn: I do want to touch on something. Since he ate up my time, I’m going to circle back around. This idea of your kids hearing the information from you versus hearing it from their peers. You’ve heard the phrase, “The blind leading the blind“?

Bob: Yes.

Jacquelyn: If you don’t give your kids this information—often, and in detail, and in a way that kids can understand it—they’re going to get it from somewhere else.

Bob: Yes; their 13-year-old friend, who doesn’t know anything, is going to be coaching them.

Jacquelyn: Correct.

Dennis: They will find out.

Bob: That’s right.

Dennis: They are going to find out.

Jacquelyn: Oh, yes!

Dennis: So you make the choice, as a parent, “Where do I want my children to find out about sex?” And the question, Bob—I’ve heard you ask a group of parents before: “Do you want your children to have the same experience you had, growing up?” That might include where you found out about sex, and nobody holds their hands up.

Bob: Yes; very few parents say, “Yes, I’d like my kids to have the same experience I had when I was growing up,”—right? [Laughter]

Dennis: Okay; Daniel, you’re up.

Bob: And by the way, you’re down to about four-and-a-half minutes now; so go for it.

Daniel: As a schoolteacher, I can get that lecture out in three-and-a-half minutes.

Bob: Way to go.

Daniel: Chapter 7: “It’s okay to break up and get back together.” I think, as parents, when we see children break up and get back together, we think it’s kind of cute; but I think it’s dangerous. I think, when you break up—biologically, there are some things going on—stress levels are going up with cortisol; you’ve lost your dopamine/oxytocin-hit from the intimacy with this other person. So, in the midst of that pain, it’s easy to go
back to that other person and get back together. I think that fosters dependency. Some of the ugliest relationships that I witnessed, and I think Jacque witnesses—they do break up and get back together a lot.

**Bob:** We’ve coached engaged couples, for years—that if you break off an engagement, there needs to be a six-month period of no contact, while you sort this out; because—exactly what you’re saying. The *easiest* thing in the world to do is go: “I feel lonely. I miss her. I miss the feeling,” and compromise on what broke you up—compromise on those things and get back together just so you can have that hit of dopamine again from the relationship.

**Jacquelyn:** And you see that playing out in adult relationships *all the time.* A great, fabulous guy, who loves you, and you’re in a great relationship, you don’t break up—that’s just the truth of the matter.

**Dennis:** Yes; and I think what *draws* a couple back together may be that they were having sex in their dating relationship. They get lonely; and so, “Why don’t I just get back now that I’m feeling lonely again?”

**Daniel:** Yes; I think you get these young people, and that sex glues them together in ways that are enormously unhealthy.

**Dennis:** —and they don’t understand it.

**Daniel:** No; and it sustains the relationship—it keeps them together. That dependency that it fosters—when you break up and get back together, you begin to define yourself by the relationship: “I’m good if my relationship is good,” / “I’m bad if my relationship is bad,” and you’ll take any behavior. This doesn’t mean just girls—I know boys in these dependent relationships, where they put up with *terrible* treatment from their girlfriends; because they define themselves by the relationship, and the relationship is artificially propped up by sex.

**Dennis:** And some girls put up with an abusive guy because of the closeness they feel when they do become intimate.

**Daniel:** Yes; and that abuse that begins—that level of emotional abuse—that escalates.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Daniel:** When I talked to Christine Harada [spelling uncertain], who runs a ministry for women, who are escaping abusive relationships—she said the one thing she saw, every single time / every pattern of abuse, was a break-up-and-get-back-together relationship, without exception.
Bob: Yes; so did you have break-up-and-get-back-together relationships when you were a teenage daughter?

Jacquelyn: A few, but I don’t really put up with that. [Laughter] But part of that issue comes from your identity and your self-worth. If you aren’t really fully grounding your kids in the idea that: “You have value, because you’re created in God’s image,” / “You have value, because we love you and you’re a part of this family,” then that makes them really susceptible to this defining themselves, kind of, in terms of another person. And when you’re defining yourself, based on the opinions of a 16-year-old boy or girl, that’s going to be really shaky.

Bob: Now, you’re hitting on themes that we talk about in the Passport2Identity™ resource between parents and teens. You have to get in and help a 15-year-old/a 16-year-old, who is full of self-doubt / who is feeling awkward, wondering: “What am I good at?” “How do I get people to like me?” [Ringing] Okay; you want me to quit talking about Passport2Identity?

Dennis: Well, I want to say this—parents need to be the parents. If you’ve got a child, who’s been in a very—well, how else can we say it?—intimate relationship, the parent needs to have full authority, within the relationship he or she has with his children, to be able to step in and establish boundaries and protect your child from what he or she may not be fully aware of. They may not know how vulnerable they are.

Bob: Okay; so the myth is that “We should break up and get back together and everything’s going to be fine.” Jacquelyn, what’s your next myth you want to tackle?

Jacquelyn: I want to tackle number five—it’s: “Love and sex are the same.” This kind of springboards on this idea of this breaking up and getting back together. What happens, in the course of a teenage relationship that does have sex involved, the sex is too powerful, and too deep, and spiritual for this relationship to contain it in a healthy way. We know, as part of a marriage, that sex is within this balance of all these other things. In a teenage relationship, the relationship gets smaller and the sex gets bigger.

What goes on in a girl’s mind is—she has to kind of figure out / do some kind of mental gymnastics to make herself feel okay to be in this relationship. This is kind of a psychological theory called “Dissonance Reduction”—you take two things, that seem not the same, and you make them fit based on kind of the trauma or the issue that you’re experiencing at the time. So, the biggest issue that girls do not understand is boys give love to get sex and girls give sex to get love. These two concepts do not work together; so they do this kind of crazy mind trick, where they convince themselves that “Because we’re having sex, we are in love and he loves me,” and “The more sex we have, it’s okay; because he loves me.”

Daniel: Yes; I think she’s right on there. You know, there’s some biology there—the male limbic system is smaller than the female limbic system. Girls, on average, have
greater emotional dexterity. I think one of the passports to sex—and young men learn this quickly—is if you say, “I love you.” When a young man says, “I love you,” to a young woman, he’s saying something *entirely* different than she’s saying to him.

**Bob:** I coached my kids on this; in fact, I told my boys: “If you say to a young woman, ‘I love you,’ the next word should be, ‘Will you marry me?’ Those two should follow together; because what you’re saying to a young woman is: ‘I’m committed to you. I’m pledging myself to you.’”

I was free with this term—what I was saying, when I said to a young woman, “I really love you,”—I was saying: “I’m fond of you. I like you a lot. I like spending time with you. You’re a special person to me, right now.” Commitment was something completely different; but women hear “Commitment” when they hear it [“I love you”]. Men just mean “fondness”: “I like what I’m *feeling* right now.”

**Jacquelyn:** And the rapid timeline for saying, “I love you,” is really alarming. You hear kids that have been dating for *two weeks* say, “I love you.” Kids that are not even dating say, “I love you,”—it just gets thrown around. This idea of this biblical, deep, committed love is just not really present in the culture anymore.

**Dennis:** And the way this works its way out—among single people today in their teens, 20s, and 30s—is guys are waiting until they’re 29 to get married / girls 27 ½.

**Jacquelyn:** Correct; yes.

**Dennis:** So when they say, “I love you,” it’s not followed up with a ring, and with a promise, and with a vow.

**Bob:** think maybe we’ve dealt with that before the timer went out.

**Dennis:** Well, I just kind of wonder, “Are there any that don’t have to do with sex?”

**Daniel:** A lot of them do; but that’s—I mean, God designed us; and it becomes part and parcel to a relationship at some point. Whether it’s done in a healthy fashion or an unhealthy fashion, we’re getting there.

**Bob:** A lot of teen dating has to do with sex in our day. In fact—I don’t know what the statistics are—but the vast majority of both young men and young women—by the time they’re 18, they’ve been sexually active.

**Daniel:** It’s about 70 percent—is the numbers that I see.

**Bob:** So, the intertwining in the mind of the teen—there’s a connection between dating somebody and having sex with that person. It may be a means to an end for a guy; it
may be a way to try to keep the relationship “healthy” for a girl; but there’s some connection there.

**Dennis:** Alright, Daniel—what’s your fourth myth of teen dating?

**Daniel:** “Serial dating and living together will help me stay married.” The American path to marriage looks like this: “I’ll start dating as a teenager. As I get older, I’ll have a few serious relationships. I might have multiple sex partners. I’ll co-habit / I’ll live with somebody—maybe more than one person—and have several co-habiting relationships. All of that will be great practice for marriage.”

I think our children, Christian or not, that gets infused into their thinking. Something along the order of 80 percent of the people in America don’t see any moral implications with co-habitation. All that’s wrong! All the significant studies say that: “The more people you live with, the higher the divorce rate.” Even living with a person you’re going to marry increases the divorce rates.

**Bob:** I had a young man come up to me at a Weekend to Remember® marriage getaway. He was engaged to his fiancé, and they had not be sexually active. He said: “Everybody at work is telling me I am crazy. They’re saying,”—here’s the language—‘Would you buy a car that you haven’t taken on a test drive?’” [He said,] “How do I know if we’re going to be sexually compatible in marriage for the rest of my life if I don’t test this out?”

What do you say to a high school student who says that to you?

**Daniel:** To a high school student, who’s not a Christian—I’m just trying to do the math—I’m just saying, “I wish I could tell you the world was wired for you to have sex with as many people as possible, and it’s going to turn out great; but that’s not the way it works.” I think, to a Christian person, I would say: “Do you trust God or not? God’s either big enough to make you sexually compatible or He’s not really God.”

**Bob:** I said to the young man—I said, “She’s a woman; right?” He said, “Yes.” I said: “You’re a man,”—I said: “You are sexually compatible. [Laughter] It’s built in to how God designed you to be sexually compatible.”

But there is this mythology that says, “This is something you have to test out and get experienced at before you lock in on one partner for a lifetime.”

**Daniel:** In my mind: “You’re in—you’re all in. Putting your toes in the water is not helpful”; but “How to get our children to understand that?” is the issue.

**Bob:** Well, and in fact, the idea that you’re going to be married and having a fulfilling sex life after you’ve had multiple partners?—the odds are not with you on that one. The research shows: if you’ve had multiple sex partners, it’s going to have implications on
your marriage sexuality, whereas, if you have followed God’s design, the odds are with you. It doesn’t mean—and we need to say this, right up here—

**Jacquelyn:** Yes; absolutely.

**Bob:**—it doesn’t mean that, if you save yourself for marriage, you’re going to have an incredible sex life just by virtue of the fact that you stayed within God’s boundaries. There are still things that you may have to work out and get some help with; but the odds are better if you follow God’s plan than if you say, “Well, let’s test this out three or four ways.”

**Dennis:** And the illustration of what Daniel’s talking about there—working its way all the way through adolescence into the 20s and 30s—I have a friend, who is a pastor at one of the leading churches in America. This is a Bible-teaching church that presents Jesus Christ and the authority of Scripture clearly—week after week / day after day—in everything the church offers.

He leads a marriage preparation class, which is comprised of a bunch of 20- and 30-somethings, who are in the process of being engaged and going through preparation to get married. He inquired of them: “How many of you are living together?—how many of you are co-habiting?” And he said, “100 percent.”

Now, just because we teach it / just because the Bible said it, doesn’t mean that people are going to embrace it. This goes back, I think, to where you guys are starting. You’re starting when they’re still a teenager—at home, where the parents can build into the lives of those teenagers’ convictions/principles of what God has taught—and help them understand that there is a worldview that is clashing with the culture. And if you, as a teenager, are not clashing with the culture, you’re more than likely blending in and you’re being conformed to the world rather than being transformed by Jesus Christ.

**Bob:** The round is about to end here, so do you have any final punch you want to make before they ring the bell here?

**Daniel:** I would say something we talk to our kids about: “If you live with your partner before you’re married, you won’t get any support from us on that one.” To us, it’s enabling—it’s like the alcoholic.

**Bob:** Wow.

**Daniel:** “We’re not going to give you any money; we’re not going to support you like we would in a marriage relationship.”

**Bob:** So, “We’re not going to enable this practice on your part.”

**Daniel:** No.
Jacquelyn: And I waited. I didn’t live with my husband; and then, now, I have this fabulous support of my family—that they come in; they’re helping me work on our house. We’ve gone into our relationship with the love and support of that family. Taking a really hard line on that, I think, is really effective.

Dennis: I have a friend in south Dallas, his name is Bryan Carter, who pastors a church of—I don’t know—somewhere around 8,000/9,000 people. He did a series on being single—the last one was, “So let’s just live together,” and he talked about God’s plan for covenant-keeping marriage, where two people establish a vow and make a commitment for a lifetime. He offered to his church—anyone, who would step forward / move out, if they were co-habiting—that the church would provide for marriage preparation, the wedding dress, and the first night of the honeymoon. Seventeen couples showed up at 2:00 that afternoon at the church.

He’s, now, done this multiple times. We need to realize that the culture is not becoming more Christian; the church is becoming more like the culture. The question is: “How can we be shrewd?” I think—when he offered to pay for the wedding, and for couples to be able to be prepared for marriage, and then to call them to make a covenant for a lifetime—I think that’s the way to go about it.

Bob: You paused the timer, so you could get in your last point there.

Dennis: I, actually, paused it during your rant so that you could finish without being interrupted; because I know—I know I’d pay the price for it. [Laughter]

I just want to thank, Daniel—you and Jacquelyn—for being on the broadcast. Thank you for your work on this book, and thank you for your work in public schools with teenagers. That is a true mission field.

Bob: And if our listeners want to get in touch with you, they can call you; right?

Daniel: Literally, call us on the phone.

Bob: Okay; so, on our website, at FamilyLifeToday.com, we have information for how you can get in touch with Daniel and Jacquelyn.

Thank you, guys, for being with us. Let me encourage—

Dennis: You might get a few calls, by the way. [Laughter]

Daniel: You know, we would love that; we think that’s great.

Bob: I hope before anyone calls, though, they will go to our website—FamilyLifeToday.com—and get a copy of your book, The 10 Myths of Teen Dating. It’s
available for sale, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com; or you can call to order: 1-800-FL-TODAY.

I also want to remind our listeners about next week—big week for us. We’ve got FamilyLife®’s very first theatrical motion picture / full-length movie called Like Arrows. It’s going to be in theaters for two nights only—next Tuesday, May 1st, or next Thursday, May 3rd. You have two opportunities to go to the movies with your friends and see a great film that is all about the journey of parenting. You can see the trailer for Like Arrows, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com.

We think of this movie as the beginning of a journey that we hope parents will go on with us through FamilyLife’s Art of Parenting™ video series—a brand-new video series that’s going to be available, as an online course, for free; or you can go through it with other parents in a small group / in a church class. The kits are available now. Go to FamilyLifeToday.com to find out more about the eight-session video series called FamilyLife’s Art of Parenting with Dennis and Barbara Rainey, Alistair Begg, Kevin DeYoung, Bryan and Korie Loritts, Elise Fitzpatrick, Dr. Meg Meeker, Tim and Darcy Kimmel—great lineup of folks talking about the entire journey of parenting, from birth through the teenage years. Find out more at FamilyLifeToday.com.

Let me just mention—we’ve got a little bit of time left if you’d like to order the Art of Parenting kit—it’s available for a few more days at a deeply-discounted price. Get the information when you go to FamilyLifeToday.com.

This weekend, we’ve got hundreds of couples, who are going to be joining us in Atlanta; in suburban Dallas; in Frisco, Texas; in Orange County—in Anaheim—and then, north of Orange County in Ventura, California. We’ve got four Weekend to Remember® marriage getaways happening this weekend. Pray for these couples as they head out for a weekend getaway.

Pray for the pastors and spouses who will be attending as well. We have, over the years, been able to scholarship pastors and their spouses to get away for a weekend and focus on their marriage thanks to folks, like you, who have made the Pastor Scholarship Fund possible. We are asking listeners today to consider helping to pay the cost for a pastor and spouse to be at one of these getaways. You can make a donation to the Pastor Scholarship Fund when you go to FamilyLifeToday.com, or you can call to make a donation to the fund. Call 1-800-FL-TODAY and just mention that you’d just like to donate to the Pastor Scholarship Fund for the Weekend to Remember. Again, pray for these folks who are going to have—what we trust will be a great weekend getaway this coming weekend.

We hope you’ll join us back tomorrow when our guest is going to be Dr. Ted Baehr. We’re going to talk about movies—about Christian movies / about Christians in movies—about how families can watch a movie and then how to have a good spiritual
conversation about that film. That all happens tomorrow. I hope you can be with us 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 tomorrow for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

*FamilyLife Today* is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas; a Cru® Ministry. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

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