Bob: Every husband/every wife has a desire for their marriage to flourish and to thrive. Jen Weaver says a big part of your marriage thriving is for you to learn to trust God.

Jen: I think when we step back and we say, “Well, my marriage will be better if we could come at it together,” or “If only my husband would fix these things, then things would improve.” I think we’re missing a part of the picture, where Jesus wants to do a work in us. He’s capable of doing a work in our marriages, independent of what our husbands do, just by how we live—by how we trust God / by how we walk in obedience to what He says.

Yes; it is ideal for you both to be on the same page—for you and your husband to come and work on things together—but there is favor that rests on a woman, when she trusts God with her marriage / when she trusts and receives her husband as a gift from the Lord, even when he’s not at that place of fully acting on it yet.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Thursday, January 3rd. Our host is Dennis Rainey, and I’m Bob Lepine. Learning to trust God in your marriage is easier said than done, but it is key to your marriage thriving. We’re going to hear more about that today from Jen Weaver. Stay with us.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us. So, we’re finally going to get the secret.

Dennis: We are!

Bob: I’ve been looking for the secret for awhile; we finally have got the secret ready to unfold today.

Dennis: Jen Weaver joins us on the broadcast. What is the secret of a wife truly being happy?

Jen: Oh man, trusting God and all the things that come with that! [Laughter]

Dennis: We’re going to get to that question in a second. Jen is a first-time guest on FamilyLife Today. She is from the Dallas/Fort Worth area, married to Jared since 2008,
has two children, and has a great blog and a new book called *A Wife’s Secret to Happiness*.

I love the way you and Jared started your marriage. You guys decided you would be courageous and write your own vows. How did that go for you?

**Jen:** It was great! It was a little intimidating at first, though; because I wanted the vows to be kind of simple, because I wanted to achieve them. Thankfully, we had premarital counseling. The pastor we met with—he explained—he said: “Your vows are things that you’re aspiring to. Set high goals. You don’t want to set goals that are easy for you to hit tomorrow and then you’re like, ‘I got this.’” [Laughter] We want to grow continually closer together and in our relationship with God, so our vows are lofty.

**Dennis:** At that point, you have to decide, specifically: “What has God called you to be, as a wife?—as a husband?—and what has He called you to do?”

Where is a wife supposed to start at this point, Jen?

**Jen:** I think, for me, a lot of where I needed to start was recognizing that my life, as a wife, was an expression of my faith. It wasn’t something separate from my relationship with God. If I trust God; and if I want to walk in obedience to what He says; and if I trust that He’s going to equip me to be the wife who honors, and loves, and cherishes, and always puts my family first—and honors my husband in that—then I can trust that He’ll equip me and He’ll walk with me as I’m learning to do that.

**Bob:** This is where Ecclesiastes 4:12 kind of came on—the lights came on for you when you read that verse; right?

**Jen:** Yes; yes, because we *need* Jesus as the third strand.

**Bob:** The verse says that “A cord of three strands is not easily broken.”

I remember hearing somebody tell me once about a braid—braiding hair. They said, if you try to braid hair with two strands, no braid survives with two strands—it all just falls apart—you have to have the third strand. But when you look at braided hair, typically, all you can see is the two strands. You can’t see that third strand that’s running through the braid—it looks like it’s just two—but there’s really an invisible third strand in there.

**Dennis:** Jen, do you know when your braid was first stretched, where you wondered if it was going to break, early, in your marriage?—your first argument/your first fight?

**Jen:** Yes.

**Dennis:** You do?
Jen: Oh, man, I have so many memories of them. One of the memories, actually, was a time I was complaining, where I thought I was praying; but I was before the Lord, complaining. [Laughter] He’s often really dramatic with me, because I respond to Him that way. I heard God in my head, almost like His voice was echoing down a distant hallway, saying: “Are you going to let Me in? Are you going to let Me into this room and actually be with you and talk with you about this?” In that instance, I was complaining about my husband and some argument, and remember thinking: “Well, God, aren’t You here—are’nt You here, because I’m praying? Isn’t that what I’m doing?”

He started talking to me about how I needed to be intentional in bringing Him into my marriage—that even though my husband and I were both believers, I was just assuming, “Oh, God, then that means You’re here as a natural by-product,” instead of recognizing: “No; I can be intentional in bringing Him in and asking God, ‘What are You doing in this time? We’re having an argument; Lord, what is the thing that You want to lead us to?’” That awareness changed everything for me.

Bob: What does that look like, practically? I mean, when you talk about being aware or bringing God in, how does that manifest itself as you guys are going through life?

Jen: One of the ways for me is—I often know when I’m about to broach a really difficult topic with Jared. I know when I’m mad before he knows that I’m mad. I’ll go and I’ll ask God: “Is this something that I need to address right now? Is this something that really needs to come up to the surface, or do I need to let it go?”

And then, as we’re going to go into this time of talking about difficult things—where we have different opinions on what needs to happen with our kids, or our careers, or where we’re going to live—Jared and I will often pause and ask God to be in the conversation, before we get into it; so that the Lord will lead that instead of just our emotions or opinions.

Dennis: At that point, you describe your life as being a gateway, where you’re inviting God to come into the relationship and be present there. Describe how you do that.

Jen: Yes; oh, a lot of it is pausing. I want to pause and take stock of where I’m at: “Okay; how am I feeling? How am I handling this?” because even when I’m right in my opinion, I can be wrong in my approach. [Laughter] A lot of it is just pausing, not lashing out, not pushing Jared’s buttons—which, he’s a lot better at this than I am. He is very calm; and sometimes, even, I get upset that he’s calm in the midst of an argument. I’m like: “I’m mad! Aren’t you mad? Get mad!” He’s like: “No, babe, we’re on the same team.” Me winning in this isn’t the goal—that’s not the win. Us being unified; us moving forward in a healthy way—that’s the win.

Dennis: My son, Samuel, is a counselor in Nashville. He wrote a piece the other day that was talking about how carpenters measure twice and cut once.
Bob: Yes.

Dennis: It’s kind of what you’re talking about. You measure your words twice before you express them once. The best thing you’re describing here is to pause and to bring the presence of God into your marriage at the point you have disagreement—and perhaps a heated one—where God can calm things down, and you can relax, and then you can have more of an objective discussion.

Jen: Yes; and then I’m trusting Jesus to be in the midst of it—to guide our conversation and for Him to bring about the end that He wants. Sometimes, I can advocate for myself—I’m just advocating, advocating, advocating; and it gets nowhere. Then, there are other times when God tells me, “Just trust Me in this,” and He brings things to Jared’s attention—that it wouldn’t have mattered if I told him 50 times—when God spoke it to his heart, there’s such drastic change.

Bob: That’s one of the things we talk with couples about at our Weekend to Remember® marriage getaways. When there is conflict—and there’s going to be conflict in a marriage, because you have two imperfect people, who are trying to blend and make it work—when that conflict occurs—and when you feel like you need to address, or confront, or bring something up—if you do pause, if you do go to God first, if you do examine your own heart on the matter first, this can lead to a lot of conflict being resolved before the two of you ever sit down and talk.

There’s a lot of conflict that you just need to overlook; or it was your own passions or your own heart that was the issue, and not anything that your spouse did. Now, you may still need to go ahead and press through and address some things that are big issues, but there’s a lot of stuff that will fade away if you go to God with it first.

Jen: True. And there are things that we can sometimes let fester that, really, if they’re brought out into the light in casual, nonthreatening ways, can be resolved really quickly. I remember, in our first apartment, I lined up artwork on the hallway. If you walked down the hallway, there are all these pictures, and paintings, and prints, all on the carpet, leaning against the wall. It was like that for months.

In my home, growing up, my mom picked out the artwork and my dad would hang it. Well, in Jared’s house, growing up, his mom handled the whole thing. [Laughter]

Dennis: So, how was he at mind-reading?

Jen: He was not good! And I was not happy about it! [Laughter] For weeks, he’s thinking, “Why is she not just getting with the program and hanging the artwork?” and I’m thinking: “I did my part! Why is he not doing his part?” It wasn’t until we actually had a conversation about it—and it didn’t need to be heated. I was upset about it; and I burst out one day, “Why aren’t you doing this?!” We actually had a conversation about it, and
I realized it didn’t really need to be a festering thing if we had just been able to talk about it.

Bob: Jen, there are a lot of women listening to you talk about your relationship with your husband; and they’re going, “You know, things would be okay if I had a godly, spiritually-minded husband, who is listening to the Lord, and who’s patient, and who puts up with my emotional outbursts and says, ‘It’s going to be okay, babe,’”; you know? [Laughter] I mean, the blessing of a godly husband is a blessing that a wife ought not take for granted.

Jen: Yes!

Bob: And you’ve experienced this; but you’ve also talked to a lot of women, who say, “That’s not my story.”

Jen: Yes.

Bob: What do they do?

Jen: Oh, goodness, so it comes in all sorts of different ways. I think one of the things that we need to recognize, as wives as well, is that—while we’re in a constant learning process / while we’re constantly in this journey of drawing closer to Jesus and being made more into His likeness—our husbands are as well. It can be easy to sit back and say, “Well, if my husband got his act together, things in our marriage would be way better.”

But that’s part of why I wrote this book—I wrote A Wife’s Secret to Happiness specifically to the wives, because there are things that we can do in and of ourselves. I think when we step back and we say, “Well, my marriage would be better if we could come at it together,” or “If only my husband would fix these things, then things would improve,” I think we’re missing a part of the picture, where Jesus wants to do a work in us. He’s capable of doing a work in our marriages, independent of what our husbands do, just by how we live—by how we trust God / by how we walk in obedience to what He says.

Yes; it is ideal for you both to be on the same page—for you and your husband to come and work on things together—but there is favor that rests on a woman when she trusts God with her marriage—when she trusts and receives her husband as a gift from the Lord, even when he’s not at that place of fully acting in it yet.

Dennis: What I would say to wives, as they go through process with their husbands: “Let your kids, as they grow older, let your kids into the interior of that relationship; so they learn how you’re processing and how you’re applying your walk with Jesus Christ into the relationship. You’re training them to know how to do relationships as they grow up and then, ultimately, with a partner in marriage.”
Bob: At what level do you let your kids in? Because there are a lot of couples, who are listening, going, “Do you mean fight in front of the kids?”

Dennis: Stimulating arguments; yes—they’re with you in the kitchen; they’re watching you two kind of go at it with each other and they’re locked onto you. At that point, you have to stop and explain what’s going on, and how you are processing, and how your faith in Christ and your trust in the Scriptures makes a difference in how you’re treating your spouse.

I think you do that when they’re little, when they’re medium, and when they’re big; because, at some point, they will leave the house and they’re going to have their own relationships. You are their number-one trainer of how to do marriage.

Bob: Jen, I remember talking to Elisabeth Elliot years ago. I don’t know if you know that name, but she was a writer and a speaker. She talked about the fact that a lot of wives look at their husbands the way that we look at an ink stain on a white shirt. She said if you look at a white shirt, and somebody has a leaky pen in their pocket, your eyes are immediately drawn to the spot that is right there, front and center, in what is an otherwise completely white shirt—99 percent white—but it has that one ink spot right there.

She said a lot of wives are drawn to the failings of their husband, while ignoring the value/the things that the husband brings that are worthy of honor and respect. Do you find that hard for you?—to focus on your husband’s attributes rather than his flaws?

Jen: Oh, it’s all about where I train my eyes; so yes. If I let myself focus on all of Jared’s flaws—I can pick them out; I can nitpick them with the best of them—and that’s true, too, with our boys. I want the way that I speak to Jared in front of our boys—and not just in front of them, but including in front of them—to speak to his character, to speak to his role in our family, to speak to what it means to be a husband/what it means to be a father.

It’s easy to look at the things that they don’t do or to downplay the good that he does—to think, “Oh, it’s not that big a deal that he takes out the trash.” But if I’m only training my eyes to see the bad things and I’m working to train my eyes to see the good things, then it’s a huge deal that he takes out the trash; and it’s a huge deal in how I see him, and how I speak to him, and how I view our relationship—and how our boys see that: “Wow! Even this little thing—Mom really loves that about Dad. Dad really cares for us in that way.”

Dennis: You used the “R”-word, “role.”

Jen: Yes.
Dennis: Your husband’s role—

Jen: Yes.

Dennis: —you believe the Bibles teaches that a husband is to truly lead, love, and serve his wife and his family.

Jen: I do!

Dennis: A lot of young women today really recoil at the thought of having to follow their husband. Now, in following, it doesn’t mean you can’t be a partner in life; but at some point, somebody has to make a decision. You believe, at the point, after your husband has heard your opinion, he is the go-to person to make the final decision; right?

Jen: I do, and there’s freedom in that.

Bob: You know that your response to what the Bible teaches about husbands leading and wives respecting and responding—you know that’s pretty countercultural—

Jen: Yes.

Bob: —even in the church.

Jen: —even in the church!

Bob: So, when you talk with your peers, and they go, “Oh, come on…”—tell me about those conversations.

Jen: Well, they were intimidating at first. Even in starting to write the book, I would go back constantly and ask the Lord: “God, are You sure? Am I really understanding You right in this?” [Laughter] because I would—I would read other books or hear other speakers. A big thing that’s talked about a lot, culturally, in the Christian world, right now, is mutual submission; and that you each submit to each other and you kind of take turns in what’s most important and who makes the decisions.

I just couldn’t find that modeled in Scripture. I couldn’t find that modeled even in the Trinity, when I would look at the roles that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit play, and how each has a designated role. When Jesus asked God to send the Holy Spirit, and how Jesus says, “If this cup could be taken from me, but God, I’m going to do what You say…—there is that transfer/there’s a hierarchy of authority, even in how the Godhead operates. I kept seeing, over and over again, how authority is transferred through submission—and how I’ve seen it play out in my own life.

A lot of conversations with peers have really been encouraging them that, one, submission is not a dirty word—it’s not a product of the Fall, but it’s a gift from our
Father—that it’s intended to do good; it’s intended to empower a woman when she submits to her husband. It doesn’t mean to be a doormat; it doesn’t mean to be silenced and not to have an opinion, but it means to yield your heart to your husband—to trust him as the leader; to walk with him under covering; to share things in respectful ways, not dishonoring.

There’s a big thing right now, just in culture overall—that’s very pro-women and, therefore, anti-men—and that’s not of God either. You can be for women and for men. I can be for the voice of a woman—the role of a wife and the blessing, and authority, and gifts that God has given to a woman—and also for the covering that God gives her through her husband.

**Dennis:** You know, the Bible begins with God stating three times, in I think three verses, Genesis 1:26-28—He made them male and female to reflect His image. God created them male and female. It is God who determines sex; and it is also God who determines what the responsibilities are in this institution He also created, called marriage.

He’s not trying to make people miserable in that. He’s really trying to release two people to be responsible for their role. In the case of a man, he has to die to himself—he has to empty himself out, just as Christ did when He went to the cross. And a woman has to die, also, to herself to fulfill her role. It’s not that one gets to have their way and the other doesn’t; it’s that both people, who are followers of Christ, get to do so in an adventure, where you’re fulfilling God’s design and assignment for you, as a husband and a wife.

**Jen:** In a lot of ways, I think the husband has a harder role; because he gets to give of himself like Christ gave Himself for the church, and he gets to love his wife like he loves himself. It is empowering for me, as a wife, because I get to trust Jared.

**Bob:** But what if you’re married to a guy, who’s not a spiritually-minded, rock-solid guy like your husband is? What if you’re married to somebody, who is self-oriented and self-interested? Is a wife supposed to submit to that guy?

**Jen:** Abuse is never okay, and it doesn’t just need to be physical forms of abuse—it could be any form of abuse. When a husband becomes abusive, he’s abdicating his role—he’s abdicating his role to do good to his wife—and they need to have healing together. Both of them need to work on things to bring about the restoration of their marriage. I believe that God can restore every marriage, no matter where it is.

For the wife, though, that is struggling seeing her husband not being at the level that she wants—he’s a good guy; he’s trying to do good—but maybe he’s being selfish, or maybe he’s not seeking the Lord the way that she wants, or maybe he doesn’t exhibit the elements of spiritual leadership that she wants in her home—my encouragement to
her is to bring all of that before the Lord: to draw near to God and ask Him, “Okay; God, in this season, what does this need to look like for us?”

Some of it may just be submission in the way that she responds to him / in the way that she approaches difficult things. I can come to Jared and I can demand things of him, or I can ask things of him. I can come and say, “Hey, you’re really messing up here,” or I can come, saying, “This thing is hard for me; can we talk about ways that we could make this work better, together?” So, in the yielding of her heart, a lot of that is just in how she positions her heart toward her husband.

**Dennis:** Yes; one of the things you say in your book: “Submission means a yielded heart, not a silenced one.”

**Jen:** Yes.

**Dennis:** What women need to do is express their opinion/their perspective in a way where the husband can hear. There’s a way a wife knows she can do that, where he will hear, and there’s another where she knows she’s going to get a reaction in the way she shares her opinion.

**Bob:** Well, and let’s make sure the husband hears that he needs to be leading with love and care for his wife as a primary responsibility.

**Dennis:** —with sacrifice.

**Bob:** Right.

**Dennis:** That’s the key; because a man, who gives up his life for his wife will earn her respect.

**Bob:** I think both husbands and wives—and this kind of takes us back to where we started—both husbands and wives need to recognize that, at the end of the day, the person we want to please most in our relationship is not ourselves; it’s not even our spouse—we want God’s joy and pleasure to be at the center of a relationship, not our own desires or passions.

**Dennis:** Yes; and I love what Jen has as a subtitle for her book: *Receiving, Honoring, and Celebrating God’s Role for You in Your Marriage*. If you just take those words—receiving, honoring, and celebrating—those are all acts of faith that every woman, who’s listening to this broadcast, will benefit from if she can step out and truly embrace God’s design for her life.

**Bob:** The book is called *A Wife’s Secret to Happiness: Receiving, Honoring, and Celebrating God’s Role for You in Your Marriage*. It’s written by our guest today, Jen
Weaver; and we have copies of the book in our FamilyLife Today Resource Center. You can order the book from us, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com; or call 1-800-FL-TODAY.

I’m thinking that—for a listener to get a copy of Jen’s book and to get a copy of your wife, Barbara’s, book, Letters to My Daughters—read both of them together. That’s a great foundation for understanding how you can be the woman that God’s calling you to be in your marriage relationship. Again, find out more about both books when you go to FamilyLifeToday.com; or call if you have any questions or if you’d like to order by phone: 1-800-358-6329—1-800-“F” as in family, “L” as in life, and then the word, “TODAY.”

I want to read a note from a listener that came to us recently that was so encouraging. This was somebody who wrote in and said: “Your broadcasts have made me reexamine myself and seek the Lord for change in my life. The information you provide on marriage has given me better insight on what it means to be a wife,”—the kind of things we’ve been talking about here today.

You know, we love when we get those kinds of notes; and we also love it—when we’re in different parts of the country, and we run into FamilyLife Today listeners, and we hear about how God has used this ministry and used Dennis and Barbara’s books and other resources we’ve created in your life. We’d love to have you share your story with us. In fact, we’ve set things up so you can call a voicemail line—you can call 1-800-FL-TODAY—we’ll put you into a voicemail box, and you can share with us your story about how God’s used FamilyLife Today in your life.

If you have a story like that, and you’ve wanted to share it with us, would you just jot down a few notes, call 1-800-FL-TODAY, and leave us a recorded message? It would be a great encouragement to our whole team, here, at FamilyLife®. We’d love to hear from you. Again, call 1-800-FL-TODAY to share your story with us, here, at FamilyLife Today.

Let me also say, again, a word of thanks to those of you who, at the end of 2018, got in touch with us to share a financial gift in support of this ministry. Our team is still hard at work trying to determine what the final numbers were and whether we were able to take full advantage of our matching-gift opportunity, so we don’t have all that data in yet; but thanks to those of you who did make a yearend contribution and to those of you, who continue to support this ministry, month in and month out, as Legacy Partners. We’re grateful for the partnership we have in providing practical biblical help and hope for marriages and families in your community and all around the world.

And we hope you can join us back tomorrow when we’re going to continue talking about how a wife can reduce stress and busyness and embrace God’s design for her in her marriage relationship. Jen Weaver will be back with us tomorrow. I hope you can be back with us as well.
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; a Cru® Ministry. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

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