Bob: When something really matters, we want to make sure we get it right. As a result, Kay Wyma says a lot of us find ourselves overwhelmed.

Kay: You take parents these days—and there’s this, you know, intensity about good parenting. It’s like you judge yourself as a parent. It’s that way with performance issues. To have the person be striving to be a good parent—good luck! No matter how far you get, there’s always the next little measuring mark to cross, and you’re going to be on that treadmill to nowhere forever.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Thursday, April 4th. Our hosts are Dave and Ann Wilson; I’m Bob Lepine. Do you find yourself overwhelmed by a mountain of responsibilities?—feeling pressured to get everything perfect? We have good news for you today. Stay with us.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us. We’re going to tackle probably a universal issue today. I think if we just surveyed the listening audience and said, “How many of you are dealing with this?—you would say, ‘This is a part of my life,’” maybe three percent would say, “No! I’m not dealing with this,” and they’re all under the age of three; so—[Laughter]

But we’re going to be talking about feeling overwhelmed. We’re going to be talking about this with somebody, who—and you recognize, just in meeting her, that she’s pretty no-nonsense when it comes/when she faces an issue—it’s kind of like, “Alright; get out of my way,”—right?

Ann: I love Kay; yes!

Dave: Yes; I was going to say, “You’re a lot like Ann Wilson, my wife.” You know, it’s interesting that we’re talking about this today. I spent two-and-a-half hours last night—between the hours of 1:30 and 4:00 a.m.—couldn’t sleep. I’m not a guy that usually has problems sleeping—

Ann: Yes; you don’t do that—that’s usually me.
Dave: —but just the schedule and things coming up—overwhelmed. So it's a perfect day for me—I want to hear where you're going to help me!

Bob: Let me introduce Kay Wyma to our audience. Kay is a mom of five; she's the author of two other books. She's been, here, on FamilyLife Today as a guest before. She's a blogger; she lives in Dallas with her husband and her kids. This new book is called Not the Boss of Us. Again, that title is so Kay Wyma. [Laughter] It's like you're not overwhelmed: “You're not going to be the boss of me.” That's just kind of how you do life; isn't it?

Kay: Well, my poor children have had that yelled at them, getting out of the car. One time, I did it out the window; and I embarrassed myself, let alone the kid—that I was like: “This isn't the boss of you!” “That coach is not the boss of you!”—you know. And I was like [sound of car window rolling up] as everybody's looking, rolling up the window and scrunching down; and the kid's just shaking his head.

Because so much of the things in the world just aren't the boss of us, but we let them be the boss of us. It was like: “Hold on a second. What if we stopped for a second and allowed truth—which, actually, is the boss of us—to overwhelm us instead of all the other pressures, and circumstances, and stresses that are fleeting, even though they seem enormous in the moment?”

Bob: I love that; don't you?

Ann: Me too! I love that, and I want it; but I'm like, “How do we do that?”—

Kay: It's yours. [Laughter]

Ann: —because we feel so overwhelmed. I think every single listener would agree: “I'm feeling overwhelmed in my life.”

You, as a woman—what overwhelms us?

Kay: I mean, you could go down the list. It sort of depends on what life stage you're in; because I think each of us could, too, go, “Oh, this was so overwhelming to me in that life stage.” That's a huge thing to be able to help overcome overwhelmed—is perspective—to be able to look back in your life and go, “Oh, when I was in high school, this was the thing that so overwhelmed me”; and it would be something like, “Was I invited to prom?”—because, if I was invited to prom, then that would mean “I'm okay,” which is on the other side of so much of this stuff: “If you do this, then you're okay.”

But if you add truth to the equation—which, actually, is the reality—it changes everything; because God doesn't define us by, you know, what we do. Everything around us says: “You are who you've become,” “You are what you do,” “You're only okay if…” So it's the doing that defines who I am. Well, God determines our worth—it's
not attached to anything we’re doing—so it’s like, “Why not buy into that for five minutes?”—you know, instead of like—even if we gave it equal time. When I worked at the White House, everywhere we went/wherever I was an advance person—so whatever town we showed up in, there was always equal time. For whatever time my boss got on the air, there was a time, exactly the same, for the other side to get.

It’s sort of like, “Why don’t we give truth the same respect, and just give it equal time?”—you know?

**Ann:** Okay; paint me a picture: “What does that look like?” Let’s say I look at myself and I think, “Oh my; when was the last time I worked out?” or “What am I going to be doing, as a mom, when my kids are so out-of-control?” So, give me an example—I take a breath, and then what?

**Kay:** I think a big part of it—because a lot of that has to do with outward appearance, even. I mean, that’s a big thing for women and men, you know. They’re showing that the rise in eating disorders with young men is higher than it is with young women. So—I know; isn’t that fascinating?

**Ann:** Yes; yes.

**Kay:** It’s this obsession. We live in a society, right now, that’s very much driven by appearance. Social media has helped that, for sure; because you have these curated images that are presented to people. That’s what the reality looks like, when, you know, the truth of it is—and whether or not we know it—the picture you see is not the picture behind the picture.

I mean, we know that in our heads; but to actually have that work itself out while you’re looking at the picture just doesn’t work—so you see yourself in the mirror, and it’s like instant judgment.

**Ann:** Yes.

**Kay:** It’s like: “Could you, for a second, call it out and say, ‘That is judgment based on this.’ Is it true?”

Go to Samuel—the Lord—because, when he was choosing David as the king—you know, he’s going through all the boys, looking at all the ones that look like they should be the one, but it’s the one who didn’t look like he should be the one that was chosen. The Lord, Himself, said to Samuel, “Man looks at the outward appearance, but I look at the heart.”

So it’s like: “Could we just, for a second, let that play in my head?” and then, give myself a break, you know. We can certainly go down all the ways to be able to do that.
Bob: You battled with an eating disorder when you were in college.

Kay: I did; yes, I did.

Bob: How did it try to define you, and how did you deal with it?

Kay: Man, so much! That was a big performance pressure issue, and that's one of the chapters in the book. When I wrote the book, I sort of was like, “I don’t want to just write about this; I want to be proactive to call these things out.” It’s like, rather than be overwhelmed by performance pressures that are significant, why not be overwhelmed by truth? That is your giftedness and purpose that is woven within you.

Bob: Right.

Kay: For me, during my—you know, years, it was—I had this stress. I dealt with it through an eating disorder.

You also have people going the extra step, which is sort of how the book started—was a friend of my daughter’s that thought the world would be better without her. It was a tragedy that, to this day, still means a lot in our family; because that child was overwhelmed. They really tried to find what it was that spurred her to take an action like that, and they don’t know.

Bob: So, as you look back on your experience with the eating disorder—trying to analyze that today—what was behind it and how did you deal with it?

Kay: Yes; absolutely the same thing: “I have to do in order to be okay.” I was a great tennis player; I was a student that tried very hard. It’s sort of like—put yourself in whatever category, because it’s something for everyone—where you’ve said, “If this happens, then I’m okay.”

Bob: Right.

Kay: You take parents these days—and there’s this, you know, intensity about parenting. It’s like you judge yourself as a parent; and it’s sort of like, “You’re a parent because you have a kid that you can love better than anyone on this earth can love.”

It’s not a product—so, in those performance pressures, you have a part of that that involves a human being [treated like] a product; and people are not products—they’re humans! In our culture, there’s a trend toward that.

Ann: And I think with social media today, we are compounded with pressure; because now, we’re comparing ourselves to every other woman—to every other mom/dad—and it’s painting a very unreal picture and reality of life. We’re combatting that as well.
Kay: Right; and it makes a person an object. You could say, “You’re a good parent.” Well, there’s good parenting, you know; but to have the person be striving to be a good parent—good luck! I mean, you’re going to be on that treadmill to nowhere forever.

It’s that way with performance issues—no matter how far you get, there’s always the next little measuring mark to cross, because it’s elusive. The “enough” doesn’t exist, so it’s like you will always be striving. That’s what the world will say to you: “Strive,” “Strive,” “Strive,” “Strive,” “Strive”; “Go,” “Go,” “Go,” “Go,” “Go”; and “Be…” “Be…” “Be…” and you’re going to be judged on that.

Bob: Yes; let me turn this to the guy, who was a Hall of Fame quarterback when he was in college.

Dave: Oh, I’m glad you brought that up, Bob! [Laughter]

Kay: I love that! That’s such a good one, though!

Dave: I wanted to bring that up, but it’s so much better when somebody else does; you know?

Kay: But I love that. That’s a great thing, because that was an identifier for you; you know what I mean?

Bob: Did you feel performance pressure all the time?

Dave: Oh my. You know, I didn’t know it at the time, obviously; and then, when I got done, Ann and I get married. We go to serve as chaplains at the University of Nebraska, and—

Kay: And this will be the first time in probably how long that you have not played a sport?

Bob: In a decade maybe; right?

Dave: Yes.

Bob: Yes.

Ann: More!

Dave: Yes, I played football probably 20—18 years—

Bob: Wow.

Dave: —yes, from Little Pee Wee League deal.
**Ann:** Yes!

**Dave:** So we’re in Nebraska. Probably six months into this new life and new job, I realize, “Nobody knows who I was.”

**Ann:** Yes.

**Dave:** So I actually—I’m embarrassed to tell you this. [Laughter] I said to Ann one night—you know, no kids; just newlyweds—I said, “Hey, when we’re in a meeting or something, and somebody’s introducing me, could you just throw in that I was an all-American Hall of Fame…”—you know, I wasn’t Hall of Fame yet; but you know. She goes, “What do you mean?” I go—I’m just like: “‘Here’s Dave Wilson, he’s on staff as a minister,’—that’s terrible! I have no credibility!” [Laughter] So they don’t know it [my accomplishments]; I can’t say; because it’d be so weird if I—so she—my wife goes, “Yes; I’ll do that for you!” [Laughter]

I look back on that and I’m like, “Oh my; how…” You know, there was no social media then; I couldn’t tweet it out, so I had to have that—that was my identity—that’s all I knew as “Who I am.” I did not know anything deeper than that, which is so sad.

**Bob:** And when you didn’t have that—that first year you didn’t play football, were you unsure of who you were?

**Dave:** Oh, absolutely. Again, I’d never admit it—I’d pretend. I’d slip it in anywhere I could: “Let’s go play football. Let me show you my arm.” [Laughter] It was terrible; but I could not function apart from that—I’m not kidding—for awhile. It forced me to say, “Okay; who am I apart from this?—because this is really very little of who I am.”

**Ann:** It’s interesting, because Dave and I served as chaplains for the Detroit Lions for 33 years; so I’ve worked with these guys’ wives for 33 years. I usually say—at least, once a year—“I just want you to know that your husband could be done tomorrow in his career because of an injury,” or “…it could be ten or thirteen years.” Generally, it’s how long, Dave?

**Dave:** Three years.

**Ann:** Three years. I said, “Just know that your husband will have an identity crisis when this is over; because his whole life, he has been applauded and looked to as a pro football player.”

**Bob:** Here’s the thing, though—even when that’s still a part of your identity—and this is the point of Kay’s book—

**Dave:** Right.
Bob: —it’s one thing to lose your identity; but to own your identity and be overwhelmed by your identity—that can kill you as much as losing your identity.

Kay: Right! Yes! Unless your identity is the One who created you; because to be overwhelmed by your identity—like, your true identity—changes everything, especially if you grow to know the One whose you are; okay?

Bob: Yes.

Kay: Because He’s the Lord of the universe! There is no authority or dominion that is over Him. He sees all; He knows all. He says these words about us; and it’s like, “And the Lord God said, ‘I have called you by name.’”

Bob: Yes.

Kay: So He knows my name. Whatever the need to belong is—because that’s a huge need for people right now—and it’s why they’re searching: “I need to belong,”—it goes to the alone thing: “You are not alone,”—that’s the truth.

Dave: And when did this become a reality? I have to tell you—when I was reading your book—you can see, I folded down this page—on Page 33—and it’s when you come back from the eating disorder and your friend says, “Oh, it’s over now; and your pants look a little tight.”

Kay: Yes; that was brutal—someone very close in my life that said that.

Bob: Seriously? Wow!

Dave: And I thought, “Oh man, what did that feel like?” But—obviously, it’s never over—but how did you recover? How did you get to a place where you, now, know your identity?

Kay: Man, that’s such a great question. I think a huge part of that is the Lord paving the path for me to be able to be around people that taught me about grace. I had never heard that. I had always, as a child—I really had a faith by the time I was seven. I don’t know why; but even within church, I always heard: “You’re in,” “You’re out.” So religion was a big part for me as far as performance goes, because I always felt like I was in if I was doing good; I was out if I was doing bad.

Ann: And “God loves you,”—that’s kind of your perception that you kind of take on.

Kay: Well, sure. I knew He loved me, but I didn’t want to disappoint Him. I was in fellowship; out of fellowship—in; out / in; out / in; out. It was too overwhelming for me, so I found ways—I guess, I learned that my method of coping was my attempt to control so
that I could be okay; you know. Being set free from that was significant; okay?—the concept of grace was enormous to me.

Then, you have to sit in this world—well, what does that look like?—because you still do, but then there’s grace involved. I think that’s a huge part of the mystery of God and the mystery of faith—you know, being sure of what you hope for and certain of what you don’t see; but the “what you hope for” and the “what you don’t see” is the truth. It’s time-tested; it never changes. He doesn’t ever change—yesterday, today, forever—He is always the same.

You can look at the things in culture and society and, without a doubt, consistently, every single time, they change. It always does. It’s [the same] with any identifier—like for you, it was football—was the identifier. If my identity is attached to that, it’s going to rock the boat.

That’s why I share a story in the book about a gal named Maddy Holleran, who was at Penn, when she met NCAA competition. It changed her identifier; because she was no longer the best at what she was doing, and she didn’t know what to do with it. She, too—under the weight of feeling like she was disappointing everybody because she wasn’t the best anymore—she opted to no longer be here.

It’s like, “No!”—that’s where I sit, Bob. I’m like, “This stuff is not the boss of us!” It makes me so angry; and I’m like, “No; you don’t get to steal the life.” All this overwhelming stuff steals from us—like it steals contentment; it steals peace—but, quite frankly, when it stole the life of my daughter’s friend, I was like, “No,”—like it makes me mad right now.

Dave: I can feel your—

Kay: Well, I was with that girl’s mom last night; because it was the anniversary. I mean—[Taking time to compose herself]—I mean, what do you do? It’s too much.

Bob: I think it’s so perceptive for all of us just to pull back and to say: “Where do we go for validation? Where do we go for affirmation/for acceptance?” Whatever will give that to us—we are prone to want to perform, and to over-perform, and to become overwhelmed; because we’re so hungry for those things.

You’re saying, “The only real place to find acceptance, validation, affirmation, is in a relationship with Christ and in an understanding of grace.” This was so good that you said this, because some people can become overwhelmed by being spiritually overwhelmed.

Dave: Yes.

Kay: For sure; right.
**Bob:** “I have to do this, spiritually,” “I have to do this,” and “I didn’t read my Bible this morning,” and “I dropped the ball here,” and “I’m supposed to go to this meeting.” They find themselves overwhelmed; and they’re over-performing, thinking that either “God will love me more,” or “The people in the church will accept me more if I just perform at this level.” That’s where you have to understand, “This is about grace.”

**Ann:** I love that. And I think, too, it’s about—we can *know* it in our head, intellectually; because I’ve known that. Since I gave my life to Jesus, as a 16-year-old, that’s in my *head*; but it’s another thing to get it down to your heart—to believe it.

**Bob:** —and in your feet?

**Kay:** Yes!

**Dave:** Right!

**Ann:** Yes; to live it, to act it, and to feel it.

I know that—I was a gymnast, growing up. As a 12-year-old, I was excited—it was the first time that I had placed in a national meet, and I was so excited. I was the youngest of four. My dad was a coach; my brother was a coach. I put up my ribbons and my medals; and I told my mom: “When my dad and brother get home, make sure they come in and look at them,” and “Wake me up so that they can tell me how great I did.”

I was all excited. They wake me up; and I’m like, “Here it comes!” you know, because my family’s very athletic and very performance-oriented. My dad wakes me up, and my brother looks at me. I said: “Did you guys see my medals? Did you see my trophy and ribbons?” And my brother—he meant well—but he said: “We are the Barrons, and never be satisfied if you come home with a second place. If you don’t come home with a first place, don’t come home at all.”

**Kay:** Wow.

**Ann:** *Suddenly*, I was a failure. I felt this extreme pressure, in every single area of my life, to perform.

There’s something about going back and identifying that—like: “Oh. That’s where that false identity came from” and “Jesus, what do You think about my performance?” I remember—I’ve spent *hours* with Him, journaling: “God, what do You think of me?” Every time, I hear, “You are My beloved daughter.”

**Kay:** Beloved. I was about to say, “You want to know what He thinks?”—beloved.

**Ann:** Yes! [Laughter] And you know what? We believe the lies! Why don’t we believe that truth?
Kay: I don’t know.

Ann: Because that is the truth—God says, “You’re beautiful. I died for you. I love you. You’re enough. I rejoice in you.” There are so many things that God—

Dave: Keep going! Keep going; I like hearing this!

Ann: I know!

Kay: Wow; it’s so beautiful.

Ann: And yet, we believe the lie of the enemy, who comes to steal, kill, and destroy; and he starts with our minds, saying, “You’re not enough.”

Dave: Kay, talk about this: “How important is it to keep inputting truth as compared to lies in our life?”

Kay: There’s definitely a proactive thing about it; but here goes the difference between religion and relationship, because even hearing that could make someone be like: “Oh my!—one more thing. I can’t do it!”

Dave: Yes.

Kay: I’m guessing that a lot of us have a weird relationship with quiet time, you know, because it does feel like something you must do. It’s sort of like, “Okay; if you can just say to the Lord, ‘I’m going to let all of my preconceived ideas and whatever it is—I’m putting them in a bag, literally, and I’m parking them outside. I’m not going to let them play. I simply want to know You.’”—that’s it. If you can go to Scripture, just saying, “Please show me who You are,”—that’s it.

Ann: That’s great.

Kay: Then, read to know Him, which is a lot different than reading it to tell me how to live.

Most of us have grown up—because everything around us in society, from the minute you’re born—like, you leave the hospital with a chart, you know; and if you’re duo on the chart, then you’re good and you’ve got—okay? So everything around us is that message.

If I read to know Him, you might actually get to know Him, where you believe Him when He says of you: “You are honored in my sight,” “You are precious to Me,” “I love you.”
Bob: That’s so good. I’m just thinking: “Everybody listening needs to roll down their window; and you need to focus, right now, on what it is that’s overwhelming you in your life,”—alright?—“And on the count of three, we’ll all shout it together”; okay? [Laughter] You’re just going to shout, “You are not the boss of me!” Ready?—one, two, three—

All: “You are not the boss of me!” [Laughter]

Bob: You can just do that in your car as you’re driving—

Ann: I would say: “Throw them out the window—

Bob: Throw…?

Ann: —“throw the things that are overwhelming you out the window.”

Bob: I just wanted to make sure you weren’t talking about your kids or something else. [Laughter]

Dave: No; we’ve only done that once.

Bob: And then, get a copy—and don’t get overwhelmed by this—but get a copy of Kay’s book, Not the Boss of Us.

Kay: I hope you’re set free by it. [Laughter]

Bob: Yes! Absolutely. The book is called Not the Boss of Us: Putting Overwhelmed in Its Place in a Do-All, Be-All World. We have copies of it in our FamilyLife Today Resource Center. You can order it from us, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com; or call to order at 1-800-FL-TODAY. Again, the website is FamilyLifeToday.com; the number to call to order the book, Not the Boss of Us, is 1-800-FL-TODAY—1-800-358-6329.

Now, the opportunity for us to have this kind of conversation and all share in what we’ve talked about today really comes as a result of listeners, like you, who have said: “These kinds of topics/this kind of interaction is important to us. It’s not only important to us, we think it’s important for others in our community and others all around the world.”

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You know, I’m sitting here, reflecting on the fact that Kay’s book is called *Not the Boss of Us*; and here, we have the President of FamilyLife®, who is the boss of us—that’s the truth. [Laughter] So what do you have, boss?

**David:** Oh, man. I’m glad I have another boss in Jesus—that’s for sure! [Laughter]

You know, as I hear Kay share her story, I have this flashback to looking myself in the mirror my sophomore year of college and coming to terms with certain things that were going on underneath the surface in my life. I’m a recovering perfectionist. I was beginning to apply some of that, living on my own, in the area of how I looked and with fitness. I was obsessing over working out.

God confronted me with the truth in 1 Timothy 4:7—it says, “For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present and the life to come.” And I, as I looked in the mirror—I remember praying a prayer, going: “God, You have my best in mind. I want You to be defining my identity; You to be defining the time I spend and where I spend my time.”

He was really pressing in—going, “You’re obsessing and spending way too much time over how you look and working out.” I remember committing, at that time: “Alright; I won’t work out alone. I know what happens in my head when I’m working out alone; so I’m going to start playing basketball, and racquetball, and doing things with other people,” and “I’ll do that for a year.”

As I did that, God began to invite me into viewing myself the right way. Today’s conversation makes me ask, honestly—and I’d invite us all to ask honestly: “Do we let God’s truth have a louder voice to our souls and to our identity than all the lies the world feeds us?”

**Bob:** That’s a good question to ask. Thank you, David.

We’re going to continue this conversation about feeling overwhelmed with Kay Wyma tomorrow. I hope our listeners can be back with us for that.

Thanks to our engineer today, Keith Lynch, along with our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our hosts, Dave and Ann Wilson, I’m Bob Lepine. We will see you back tomorrow for another edition of *FamilyLife Today*.

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