

FamilyLife Today® Radio Transcript

References to conferences, resources, or other special promotions may be obsolete.

Being Best Friends

Guest: Kevin Thompson
From the series: Friends, Partners, and Lovers (Day 1 of 3)
Air date: May 15, 2018

Bob: One of the foundational building blocks of a healthy marriage or, for that matter, a healthy relationship of any kind, is trust. Pastor and author Kevin Thompson says when a husband and wife mistrust one another, their friendship begins to erode.

Kevin: As it does, now I don't have a partner that I necessarily know has my back; and then, especially for women, if trust isn't present, you think about the sexual relationship—there's a great deal of vulnerability that happens there. If they don't trust you, they're going to have a very difficult time being fully present with you in that moment.

Bob: This is *FamilyLife Today* for Tuesday, May 15th. Our host is Dennis Rainey, and I'm Bob Lepine. We'll spend some time today looking at how important trust is in a relationship between a husband and a wife and how you rebuild trust once it's been broken. Stay with us.

And welcome to *FamilyLife Today*. Thanks for joining us. It is always nice when you find a neighbor who has kind of the same heartbeat that you have / same passion that you have, and then you find out he's a pastor of a local church; and you just go, "This is a good thing."

Dennis: Yes! It is a good thing. In this case, the neighbor is about 100-120 miles away; but it is okay.

Bob: That's close!

Dennis: Yes; it is. Kevin Thompson joins us on *FamilyLife Today*. Welcome to the broadcast.

Kevin: Well, thanks so much for having me. It's great to be here.

Dennis: Kevin is pastor of a church near Fort Smith, Arkansas—a blogger. He's been married to Jenny since 2000 and has two children. He has written a book called *Friends, Partners & Lovers*.

I like how you start the book. You had a question to a couple, who were a little bit more than newly-married.

Bob: They were seasoned!

Kevin: I would say so. We had the eldest couple in our church—married 70 years. They had not come to know Christ—never attended a church until they started attending Community Bible in their 70s—a couple of neighbors had invited them. They both came to know Christ—just wonderful people / never had any children—would come by the office and almost adopted us, on staff, as grandkids; right? We just loved them!

They came by the office one day and had a great conversation. Then one turned to the other—Eugene turned to JoAnn and said, “Well, did you bring the bread?” JoAnn said, “No; you brought the bread.” They had a little squabble right there for just a moment. It was kind of interesting for us to sit back and watch. Mrs. JoAnn was in better health, so she went home to grab the bread. We were just talking to Mr. Eugene, married 70 years. We just asked him, “What’s the key to being married 70 years?” And Mr. Eugene, without missing a beat, said, “Tell her every day that you love her.”

Mrs. JoAnn came back, and brought in some pumpkin bread—it was wonderful. We had the opportunity to speak with her; and we said, “Mrs. JoAnn, we asked Mr. Eugene, ‘What’s the key to being married 70 years?’” And she said, “Oh, without a question: ‘Tell him every day that you love him.’” It was beautiful in that moment—we thought, “This is the key to marriage.”

Several months went by; and Mr. Eugene was in bad health—he was in hospice. I went up to see him—it was just me and him. I recounted the story—I said, “Is that really the key to being married 70 years, Mr. Eugene?” He said, “Yep, and memorize her answers.” [Laughter]

Dennis: Had they met when they were really young, obviously?

Kevin: They had met very young; both were in the military. They never had any kids, but loved each other deeply and dearly—you could see that. Whenever he was gone, in many ways, she left, too, at that point—just a beautiful couple and a beautiful value of marriage.

Bob: This has been interesting for me, because I’ve kind of followed your ministry. As I said, you’re kind of in the backyard of Little Rock—120 miles away. Marriage and family—as a local church pastor, for whatever reason, this has been a focus for you—something God’s put a burden on your heart about. Tell me about that. Why is this something that you feel so passionately about?

Kevin: Yes; I think it’s a convergence of three issues. One, my parents were divorced. I understand the pain that they went through—I watched that and the consequences that

were there for them, and for me, and my sister, as well—and still, the lasting influence of that. Secondly, it's just the idea that I didn't speak about marriage, at all, for the first ten years of marriage; because "What did I know?!" [Laughter] But just the value of what I had in Jenny, and my desire to have that, and be able to give that to other couples.

And then, thirdly, I started this blog and just had the discipline of writing. One day, I didn't know what to write about; so I wrote about marriage—what I thought was just a basic idea that Dennis Rainey has taught everybody, so everybody would know by now. I just basically ripped him off and wrote this blog, and all of this traffic came to the blog. I realized, at that moment, that what I thought was known by everybody, a different generation needed to hear it in a different way. So it was really the convergence of those three issues that made marriage become a passion of mine. It still sticks today.

Bob: Well, I've talked with enough pastors—when there are issues in the church that pastors are having to deal with, most of the issues you deal with are not eschatological issues—they are not issues about dispensationalism versus covenant theology. They're issues where the rubber is meeting the road, and that's in somebody's marriage.

Kevin: Oh, there's no question. And a pastor is on the front lines. I always call myself a "triage nurse." When somebody goes through an injury, they don't know who to call; so they call the pastor. I bring them in—I'm not a counselor in any way—but I talk to them; I diagnose them; and then try to get them to the specialist that they need.

But the joy of the pastorate is that we're there for the great days—for the engagements / for the births—for all of those things—

Dennis: Yes.

Kevin: —but we're also there on the horrific days. So it's not surprising to me—when my agent took this book to the publisher for the first time, the publisher said, "Just don't give me another book by a pastor about marriage." She said, "Well, I have a book by a pastor about marriage." [Laughter] It makes sense that so many pastors would think about this and write about this, because the chances are—if my phone were to blow up today—chances are the issues that are happening are: an affair has occurred, a gambling debt has been revealed, [or] addiction is present. It all goes back to marriage.

If you think about it, it makes sense—it's there in the New Testament. Why did Paul write about marriage?—because, if the marriage went wrong, it would affect the church that was meeting in the house. We have home groups. If I have a marriage that's bad, that small group / that Sunday school class is going to suffer because of it. Obviously, pastors are passionate about this; because we are on the front lines of what's going on.

Dennis: Kevin, you mentioned several causes of marriages blowing up: affairs, pornography, finances, [or] unmet expectations. You think those are all kind of symptoms of a much deeper issue. Explain that to our audience.

Kevin: I do. I think the number one cause of divorce is not Facebook®; it's not money; it's not sex. I think the number one cause of divorce is apathy—it's a lack of intention. We never drift into good things. If you lose 20 pounds—and a friend says, "Hey, how'd you lose that weight?"—you're not going to say: "It's the most amazing thing. I just, all of a sudden, started eating vegetables! It just came out of nowhere!" [Laughter] It doesn't happen that way! We drift into bad things.

I think what happens, in marriage specifically—I think you fall in love; and either you fall for the idea that: "This person's my soulmate, so it's going to be easy," or you fall for the lie this culture says: "Fifty percent of all marriages end in divorce, so it doesn't really matter what I do." Whatever is the root cause there, you don't put intention behind it. The love begins to dwindle—the pressure of children coming along—career and everything that's going on—you keep on, on a daily basis, pushing it to the side, thinking that there are no real consequences for that.

As you guys know, there is a price to be paid whenever you push the important things aside. So I think, if I could narrow down marriage to one word, it is the word, "intention." If you are intentional about it, chances are you're going to have a successful marriage.

Dennis: You know, I'm thinking about that word; and it's a little bit like the other side of a coin that is about commitment.

Kevin: Yes.

Dennis: Marriage is ultimately put in place by commitment—a promise. Believers in Jesus Christ believe—and we teach, here, at *FamilyLife Today*—that it's a covenant / it's a "... 'til-death-do-us-part" commitment. But that can be made at a point in time.

The only way you make good on that covenant is by doing what you're talking about—keep on investing over, and over, and over again. It's not a matter of putting \$100 in as an investment, once every six months, and expecting a return. No; it's more like putting a dime in, and a quarter, and then maybe some big change at points; because there may be those circumstances that *demand* that you step forward and love with a tough intentionality in that marriage relationship.

Bob: Well, I'm thinking of the two illustrations you talk about working out. You talk about the importance of covenant as a foundation. I've always thought about marriage like a garden. Somebody might say: "You know? I'm going to have a garden this year." And they go put up the box, and they get the soil in there. They say, "I'm committed to this garden." But then they don't do the daily things that you have to do if you really are committed to a garden. At the end of the season, you don't have anything in the garden; because the squirrels have gotten it all, or the rabbits have gotten it all, or the weeds have gotten it all. [Laughter]

Dennis: Yes.

Bob: So making the covenant—that's foundational to all of this—but doing the intentionality / the daily maintenance of your marriage—that's the only way for a marriage to thrive; isn't it?

Kevin: There's no question, and it literally is a daily process. It cannot be something that we do once a year. I think you guys do a great job with *Weekends to Remember*[®] / with cruises—these big events that are *great* for couples—but then they need to listen to your radio show on top of that [Laughter] to recognize this daily reminder of what's going on.

How many couples will go through a whole year and never read a marriage book?—never take time to have a serious conversation, from the 40,000-foot level, of what their marriage is all about? Instead, their conversation is about: “Who's going to pick up the kids today?” “What are we going to have for dinner today?” Very slowly, the big picture is getting pushed aside. They're doing so at a great risk.

Dennis: Barbara has been struggling with some allergies recently, and so she's on a diet that has just basically restricted everything except water. [Laughter] I'm just amazed where you can get allergies from today; okay?! In the midst of this, she goes, “I think I want to find a way to get maple syrup into my water,”—her coffee; okay? She's never put maple syrup in coffee, but she started doing it. And this morning, before I left to come to work, she said, “By the way, it would really be my love language if you would call that place in New England and order me some more maple syrup.”

I thought, “You know, she's letting me know that that really is important, in the midst of this dramatic diet, trying to eliminate things to find out the cause of the allergy.” I think we have to be a student of our spouse, where they don't always have to tell us.

Bob: See, she spelled it out for you! Mary Ann will say things like—

Dennis: [Laughing] I'm a slow learner, Bob! She just puts it in big print!

Bob: Mary Ann will say things like, “Oh, look, I'm out of maple syrup.” I go, “Okay.” I don't pick up from that: “What I'd really like for you to do is call that place in New England and order the maple syrup.” I just think: “Oh, she's out of maple syrup. That's tough today.” [Laughter]

Barbara says, “It would really be my love language if you would call!”

Dennis: Yes!

Bob: I can do that!—just be a little more direct with it; you know? [Laughter]

Dennis: Yes, yes; exactly.

Bob: Your book breaks marriage into three component parts, and I found this really helpful. These three words are kind of like diagnostic words, where I can say, “Okay; I’m supposed to be a friend, a partner, and a love to my wife, and she’s supposed to be the same with me.” I can kind of look at that and say: “How’s the friendship side?” “How’s the partnership side?” “How’s the lover side doing?” If all three of those are doing pretty well, the marriage is probably going to be doing well; right?

Kevin: Yes; I think so. *Friends, Partners & Lovers*, to me, is a book about what marriage is about: “What is it that you actually do?” I have a book coming out in October called *Happily*—that’s *how* marriage is supposed to be done—the attitude of the Beatitudes, basically. But *Friends, Partners & Lovers* is what I’m supposed to do, as a spouse: “What is it that Jenny needs from me?” / “What is it that I need from her?”

Whenever I think about friendship, I get this picture of us holding hands, side by side, walking through life—two peers. Whenever I’m married, I always have somebody by my side. As a partnership, we have each other’s backs. I’m scanning the horizon, 180 degrees one way, looking for opportunities / looking for threats. She’s scanning the horizon, 180 degrees the opposite way, looking for opportunities / looking for threats. In a healthy marriage, you always have somebody who has your back. And then the lover section, to me, is somebody that looks me in the eye—that knows me better than I even know myself and, yet, loves me.

You think about that! If you always have somebody—who is by your side, always have somebody who has your back, and always have somebody who sees you completely and loves you—what more do you need in a marriage relationship? I think that’s it!

Dennis: Now, when it comes time to apply these three principles you’re talking about, what’s the most important thing you would say to a husband—let’s speak to the husbands for a moment—about being your wife’s friend?

Kevin: Yes.

Dennis: And then speak to the wives here in a moment.

Kevin: I think friendship is the foundation—I think it all begins right there. Think about a first date. I’m just seeing, in that moment: “Do I like this person? Can I listen to this voice forever?”—right?—those kinds of things. To me, friendship is the foundation. Partnership becomes the walls—we’re distinguishing whose responsibility is what. And then, to me, the intimacy is the roof that helps us endure the things of life.

Whenever I think about friendship—friendship, to me, is built on this concept of trust: “Do I trust you or not?” I think, so often, that trust is proven over time: “I’m going to protect your heart, maybe even more than I protect my own.”

Whenever I think about men—I think men, specifically—they run the risk of creating distrust with their wives. So, if they will build the trust / if their word becomes their bond—if they say they're going to do the "to do" list, they do the "to do" list. If they will do that over time, it will prove them faithful—the trust will be built up—and I think the wives will have a great deal of friendship.

Bob: We're talking in generalities here; but generally, men tend to be more risk-takers / women tend to value security and safety. In fact, I think security and safety are at the heart of most women/most wives I know. They just want to know, "Am I in a safe place?" This is where a man has to recognize: "Here's what's really important to my wife. She needs to feel like, 'I can relax, because I'm safe here.'"

Kevin: And I think that's what makes adultery so dangerous / it's what makes financial deceit so dangerous—is it begins to erode away the trust. When trust begins to erode away, here's how these three factors play into each other: [Lack of] trust erodes the friendship away. As it does, now I don't have a partner that I necessarily know has my back. I think one of the scariest things for me is—in a marriage you're supposed to have each other's back. When a marriage goes bad, the most likely person to stab you in the back is the very one who's supposed to be watching your back!

Dennis: Yes.

Kevin: And then, especially for women, if trust isn't present, you think about the sexual relationship—there's a great deal of vulnerability that happens there. If they don't trust you, they're going to have a very difficult time being fully present with you in that moment. That's why I think friendship really is the foundation of what's going on.

Dennis: I really agree with you. I think this whole issue of security—at least for men—they need to major in this with their wife and maybe ask their wife: "Do you feel like I'm a safe person with you? If not, what are the areas of our relationship where you don't feel safe with me?" and then comment on that.

I think what happens with men is—we win the battle and win the woman. We think that romance has been achieved / the marriage knot has been tied, and the quest is over. The answer is: "No! The quest is just starting!"

Kevin: And it is a constant pursuit after her heart.

Dennis: —to create that safety; you're right.

Kevin: Absolutely.

Bob: Flip this around and talk about trust from a husband's perspective. What does a wife do that causes a husband to go, "I don't know if I can trust her."

Kevin: Yes; I think, from a concept of friendship in general—you think about how guys make friends. We make friends—two guys in a boat / two guys in a golf cart; right? Think about a golf cart—I think that as a great picture for women to think about friendship with their husband—we're side by side, but we're not looking at each other—we're going down the road; we're engaged in activity.

Dennis: Yes.

Kevin: Sometimes, men get a little bit sketchy when their spouse is looking at them and conversation is happening. That's why you see a couple, out for a dinner, and they're not talking to each other. The men are a little bit uncomfortable in that moment of having eyes [looking] back at them.

I think, from a friendship concept for women, one thing that they can do to assist their husband is to engage in activity. For me, my favorite thing to do for couples—to help improve your marriage—is simply take a walk. As you take a walk, you're not looking eye to eye / you're walking, side by side—you're experiencing the world, and then you're engaging one another in conversation. I do think it's this weaving back and forth.

I'll never forget—I took my kids to McDonald's one day / one night for dinner. My wife is a great cook—a gourmet cook—loves all of those things—can't stand fast food. So anytime I get the kids—they love fast food / I love fast food—we go to McDonald's.

I see this older couple over to the side. On the table is a cup of coffee for each of them, a cookie in between them, and they're both reading the newspaper. I'm watching this beautiful dance that's taking place. As they're reading their newspaper, one of them will put their paper down, and the other one will lower their paper, and they'll talk about a story: "Hey, did you see this? What about this?"

The man was doing a crossword puzzle—he put his paper down: "Hey, what's a six-letter word for this?" And they're working on it together. Then they would go back, raise their papers back up, and engage in what was going on. I thought this was a beautiful picture of what friendship in marriage is all about. You're living your lives; you're experiencing the world; and then you're bringing the good back to each other. You're sharing that good.

Good is not fully good until it's shared! Think about it—if you have a great meal for dinner tonight, you're going to text a buddy; you're going to call your wife; you're going to call a friend: "Hey, there's this new restaurant." You don't just keep it for yourself. When you see a beautiful sunset, you call that out—you call attention to it.

I'll never forget my grandparents—my grandmother was dying, and they had been married 70 years as well. My grandmother is dying—she is 90. I'm taking my grandfather to the hospital to see his wife for the *very* last time. We were driving slowly;

it is in February in Arkansas. The sun is setting over Oklahoma and just silence in the car; right? Until, all of a sudden, he says, “Look how beautiful that sunset is!”

I looked up and, sure enough, there was the sun setting. I thought to myself: “How did he see that? How did he have the possibility, in the midst of all his grief, to still see that?” Well, it’s because he had been trained, his whole life, to see the good / to search for it—not denial of the bad—but to see it / [the good]. He couldn’t help himself; but as he saw the good, he shared the good.

Whenever I think about what friendship in marriage is all about, you’ve got to seek it out. This is a culture—you don’t have to seek out the bad in this culture—it will find you! But you had better search out the good. As you search it out, then share it with one another. Specifically, if a wife is listening today, wanting a friendship with her man—I think you start in action. You start in some kind of activity, where you’re not looking at each other, eye to eye, in that moment. You are sharing life together and, as you’re doing it, you can then have that communication.

Bob: Can I just comment on the take-a-walk suggestion?—because Mary Ann will always say, “Let’s go for a walk,” and I’m going: “Where?! You mean, just like a loop around the neighborhood?”

Dennis: “What’s the objective?!”

Bob: That’s right! Now, we live about a mile away from a little shopping center that’s got some restaurants and some shops. It’s a different deal for me, if we’re walking up to the shopping center and going to do something when we get there. and then walk home—I don’t mind doing that; in fact, that’s kind of fun. But just a walk around the neighborhood?—no; I’m not interested in that. To your point: there’s an objective; there’s a goal; there’s something to conquer and achieve here; and along the way, we share life together. She doesn’t mind whether we’re walking around the block or walking to the shopping center, because she’s getting the companionship/the friendship that her soul craves.

Kevin: And you know, for us, it’s just the simple thing of burning calories. I mean, we need more exercise—we both have jobs, where we’re sitting at desks, and computers, and things like that—so just to get our steps in—that can be the goal.

Bob: There you go.

Kevin: But then the by-product of that is a much healthier marriage.

Dennis: I think what you’re challenging our listeners to do is really important: “Invest in your marriage. Be a risk-taker, and risk investing too much rather than too little.” We get married because we see good in another person. Then you get married; and you’re

living life close-up in front of each other, and you're going to see things that aren't so good. I love the illustration about your grandfather—he chose to see the good.

Bob: Yes.

Dennis: He lifted his eyes up to see what's right about the other person.

I think, if there's a listener, right now, who's focused on the negative, get your eyes off of it! Start reflecting on why you married her / why you married him in the first place. Maybe go home and put your arm around her and say: "I'd marry you all over again—

Bob: Yes.

Kevin: Yes.

Dennis: —"one of the best decisions I've ever made in all of my life."

Bob: When we talk to couples about the issue of marital intimacy at our *Weekend to Remember* marriage getaways, we talk about how critical companionship is for intimacy to be all that God designed for it to be. We're better lovers when we're better friends.

That's a part of the thesis, Kevin, in your book, *Friends, Partners & Lovers*, which we've got in our *FamilyLife Today* Resource Center. Our listeners can go online at FamilyLifeToday.com for more information about how to get a copy of your book; or if you'd like to find out when a getaway is happening in a city near where you live, the information's available at FamilyLifeToday.com; or you can call if you have any questions at 1-800-FL-TODAY—1-800-358-6329.

You know, talking about the *Weekend to Remember*® marriage getaway, we have sent out a number of gift certificates to getaways, here, in the last couple of weeks; because we've had some listeners who've gotten in touch with us and said, "We'd like to be Legacy Partners." Legacy Partners are those families who come together and, on a monthly basis, provide the financial foundation for the ministry of FamilyLife® to continue. You help keep this program on your local radio station, and you help the ministry of FamilyLife expand into countries all around the world. You help us reach more people, more regularly, every time you make a donation to *FamilyLife Today*.

Those of you who have become new Legacy Partners this month, all of your donations for the next 12 months are going to be matched, dollar for dollar, up to a total of a half-million dollars because of matching-gift funds that have been made available to us, here, during the month of May. In addition, you're receiving a gift certificate for a *Weekend to Remember* that you can use for yourself, or you can share with a friend, a family member, [or] one of your kids. The gift certificate is our way of saying, "Thank you for partnering with us." We appreciate those of you who help make the ministry of *FamilyLife Today* possible.

We're praying that there will be 300 new Legacy Partners during the month of May—that's six individuals or families from every state in America. We're asking if you would be one of the six from your state to become a new Legacy Partner. You can find out more when you go to FamilyLifeToday.com. Sign up online and get your gift certificate for a *Weekend to Remember*. Or call 1-800-FL-TODAY, and we can answer any questions you have over the phone. "Thanks," in advance, for being a part of the team that make *FamilyLife Today* possible.

And we hope you can join us back tomorrow. Kevin Thompson will be here again. We're going to talk more about how husbands and wives can be better partners in marriage—how we can come together and work together on things that matter to both of us. We'll talk about that 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 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.

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 © 2018 FamilyLife. All rights reserved.

www.FamilyLife.com