

## **FamilyLife Today<sup>®</sup>** Transcript

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### **Grow in Relationship with God**

Guest: Bryan Carter  
From the series: Seven Habits of Healthy Marriage and Family (Day 1 of 2)  
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**Bob:** You've probably been out to dinner somewhere and seen a family. Everybody is staring at their screens / nobody talking to one another at the restaurant. Maybe, you've been that family. Pastor Bryan Carter says we need to be careful about technology.

**Bryan:** One of the greatest challenges to many of our relationships—whether it is a husband and a wife or us with our kids—is technology. We're grateful for the access that it provides, but it also can disrupt families. We all understand our phones and this world of technology; but one writer / one study said the 60 percent of people can't go an hour without checking their phones. We all need some tech-free time.

**Bob:** This is *FamilyLife Today*. Our hosts are Dave and Ann Wilson, and I'm Bob Lepine. Learning how to handle technology is just one of the habits / one of the practices that are helping families be successful / helping them grow. We'll hear more from Bryan Carter about that today. Stay with us.

And welcome to *FamilyLife Today*. Thanks for joining us. As a former football guy—I was going to call you an old-football guy, but I decided for former.

**Dave:** Former.

**Ann:** That was nice that you said that.

**Dave:** That's better.

**Bob:** As a former football player, you're familiar with the legendary story—I don't know if this is true or not—but apparently, Coach Lombardi—

**Dave:** Here we go.

**Bob:** —the coach of the Green Bay Packers.

**Dave:** The Green Bay Packers who beat the Detroit Lions every—

**Bob:** Every time.

**Dave:** —time I was there.

**Bob:** When he would come in and start training camp—

**Dave:** Yes.

**Bob:** You've heard this story; right?

**Dave:** I have.

**Bob:** “Gentleman, this is a football”; right? He always started with the basics. It was back to the fundamentals—

**Dave:** Yes.

**Bob:** —the blocking and tackling. Is that true for athletes that they need to go back and remember that kind of basic stuff?

**Dave:** Yes; I mean I coached high school football for 12 years, and you find that you get distracted and lost in all kinds of little details. There are those days and weeks you have to come back into a locker room and go—“Guys, let's go back to the basics. You've got to block. You've got to tackle.” Like, Vince Lombardi went all the way back to—“This is a football.” It's very important.

**Ann:** So, are we going to get back to the basics today?

**Bob:** Well, that's the whole idea.

**Dave:** I think we're going to talk about football today. That sounds like fun.

**Bob:** Not about football. If it's true in football, it's true in marriage and family—

**Dave:** Yes.

**Bob:** —because there are those things that we just need to hear again and again to realign and recalibrate. I mean I've thought of this. If I have a car and I get it in alignment and I don't hit a curb, my car should stay in alignment. I shouldn't need to get those tires realigned; but just driving the car, it gets out of alignment. Well, just driving your marriage and family, it gets out of alignment. So, you've, periodically, got to bring it back in and realign; and that's the message we're going to hear today from our friend Bryan Carter—is a message that's a realignment message for marriages and families.

Bryan is the pastor at Concord Church in South Dallas. He is a great pastor with a thriving congregation. The three of us were at an event recently where Bryan spoke on the Seven Habits for Healthy Marriages and Families; and I think your point is right. We're going to hear

the first few of those habits today and get a chance to see—“How is our family doing on some of these basic issues?” Here is Pastor Bryan Carter.

[Previous message]

**Bryan:** Families are so incredibly important to all of us. It's in our families that we build / we find incredible happiness; but we also, sometimes, find incredible hurt. It's in our families that we learn how to relate to one another. It's there, in the context of families, that we learn from our mothers and from our fathers / from our brothers and our sisters that family is basically this foundation. It's our family of origin that gives us a context for how to relate to one another well.

One of the reasons that families are so important is because God designed us and wired us for relationships. It doesn't take long; but a casual reading there of Genesis, Chapter 1, you begin to see this framework that you and I are wired for relationships that God did not design us just to live in isolation and just to pursue our own personal happiness. Instead, God wired us for relationship. You see that in the relationship of Adam and Eve and their children. You see this context that we are created for relationship.

Families are incredibly important. Marriage is incredibly important; but it can also be somewhat messy at times as we find two sinners saved by the grace of God trying to love one another in a healthy way; but the good news about relationships and family is this: We don't have to figure it all out on our own. We don't have to just watch what we see in the media or watch what we see in the culture. The Scriptures actually give us direction on what it requires and what it means to have a healthy family.

So, for a few moments, I want to lift up these seven principles that I hope can help you and help me as we seek to be a strong and vibrant and healthy families.

Here is the first one: faith. Healthy families are committed to God first. Healthy families are committed to God first. You find this taught in Joshua, Chapter 24, verse 15 where it read this way:

Now, therefore fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Healthy families have the commitment to faith. They have a commitment to God first.

This is modeled through the life of Joshua. As the people of Israel are now settled in this new land, they become torn around all the temptation that's around them. Their loyalties and their focus gets pulled away to worshipping idol gods; but here Joshua calls them back and says, “No, no. We cannot give into this temptation of worshipping someone else or idol gods. We must make sure that God is the focus of our lives.”

We, too, face this same dilemma—all of us—whether it is to worship our kids and to make sure they are successful in every way or whether it is to worship our jobs and our careers or whether it's we're tempted to worship our own personal happiness and personal ambitions. We must always remind ourselves that the most important thing in our personal lives and in our family must be God. We must keep God first.

Jesus was asked, in Matthew, Chapter 22, "What's the greatest commandment?" He replied in these words: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might." Every family must make God the priority. We must make sure that God is not a list on our options; but instead, He is the priority for all of our lives.

The question is "How do we live this out?" Three simple ways we can live this out. The first one is prayer. There is a great book in the back of the room called *Two Hearts Praying as One*. It's a book written by Dennis and Barbara where they begin by telling the story of early on in their marriage asking a couple that had been married 25 years—"What's the secret to a healthy marriage?" They simply replied this way: "We pray together every single day."

One of the ways we keep God at the priority is to bring prayer into our marriages and to bring prayer into our homes, to make sure prayer is not just something that we do in case of emergency; but it's a weekly time when we gather and say, "How can I pray for you?" So, a husband and wife gather and catch a hand before the night goes away and saying, "How can I pray for you?"

Not only prayer, but also scripture—scripture, scripture, scripture—we ought to bring scripture into our homes. It's scripture and the word of God that gives us direction about life, that gives us direction about our problems, that gives us instruction about what God expects from us.

Then, lastly, worship. There was something about our church involvement. There was something about worshipping together as a family that allows us to be able to get closer to go and to become closer as a family. You know the studies that say, "94 percent of Christians make a decision for Christ before the age of 18." Worshipping together as a family helps the keep God first / helps to get God as the priority.

Not only faith, but then, secondly, healthy families are committed to each other. You find that in Genesis, Chapter 2, verses 24 and 25 where God presides over the first marriage / the first wedding. He says these words: "Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed."

It is here where God establishes family / establishes marriage. It is no coincidence that He establishes it by establishing a covenant relationship—a covenant between the man and the woman and God. Marriage was never designed to be a contract. Marriage was never designed to be just an agreement or a piece of paper; but marriage was designed to be a covenant between a man and a woman and God.

It is this covenant that represents commitment. That healthy families / healthy marriages—they have a commitment to one another. When people are committed to one another, it allows that relationship to have confidence and stability. It changes the context.

You remember in the book—in the Old Testament—there is a book of the Bible called Ruth. In that book of the Bible, it tells a story of this woman—this woman by the name of Naomi. Naomi is married to her husband, has two sons. Unfortunately, they move out of Bethlehem; and there, in this new territory, her husband dies, and her two sons die. In that context, it put her in an incredibly difficult position.

So, she, then, goes to her daughter-in-law Ruth. She says, “Ruth, go back home. You can start your life again.” In Ruth, Chapter 1, verse 16, here is what Ruth’s response is to her mother-in-law Naomi. She says, “Do not urge me to leave you or return from following you. For where you go, I’ll go. Where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people will be my people. Your God will be my God.”

Ruth could leave, but Ruth displays an unusual degree of commitment. She basically says these words: “I am with you no matter what happens in your life.” That’s what every family needs. That’s what every marriage needs—someone loves you and is committed to you no matter what happens in your life.

Commitment simply means this: It means to choose God’s best for another person. It’s the husband choosing God’s best for his wife or a wife choosing God’s best for a husband. It is a parent choosing God’s best for their children and children choosing it for one another. It is this idea that I am committed to you / that I’m not just committed to you in the good or the bad, but I am committed to you because you are a part of my family.

There is something about commitment that provides an unusual sense of stability to a home. It often starts with a man that’s committed to the relationship; and when the husband is then committed and the wife is then committed, it creates a home where that commitment begins to build a network and friendship and a depth to that home.

Shaunti Feldhahn in her book, *For Women Only*, says this—and her research reveals—that the number one need for most women is security. Security that she is talking about is not defined by finances alone. It’s really this emotional connection or a committed relationship. She wants to know can she trust him. When she knows that he is committed to her, it gives her and it gives her family such an unusual sense of love and accomplishment.

This is what our kids cry out for when they long for us to be at their events and at their games and be involved in their lives. It’s that commitment that gives them confidence.

Not only does it require faith and commitment, but next, time together—time together. Healthy families prioritize time together.

In Mark, Chapter 3, verse 14, Jesus—the words are written this way—“He appointed twelve (designating them apostles) so that they might be with Him and He might send them out to preach....” It is in this text, Mark 3, that Jesus is beginning His earthly ministry; and as He begins His earthly ministry, He selects these twelve disciples. These twelve disciples—as you know, they probably weren’t the most likely to succeed in their graduating class; but He picks these fishermen; He picks these tax collectors; and then the text says, “He appoints that they might be with Him.”

Those three words are significant because it means that Jesus says, “These guys are going to one day lead the church; but in order to prepare them, they need time with Me”—because Jesus understood that time together impacts our relationships. He could have chosen any way, but they spent—they were together.

When that boat got caught up in the storm, they were together. When He began to teach that Sermon on the Mount, they were together. They were together when He did that marvelous miracle of feeding 5,000 with a few fish and a few loaves of bread. They were together when Lazarus was brought back to life. They were together when there was that conflict of who would sit on the right side and the left side of Him.

But do you know what happened as they spent all that time together? It bonded their relationship. It connected their hearts with Jesus Christ. It connected their hearts with one another, and it prepared them for the future that lay ahead.

See, healthy relationships prioritize time together. There is a direct link between the time together that we spend and the quality of our relationship.

*The Washington Post* did an article that stated that the quality of time a person / a parent spends with their adolescent children has an enormous affect. There is something significant about the time that we need together as a couple / together as a family that helps us build strong and healthy relationships.

What does this look like in the context of our own relationships? Some have suggested that we ought to all have some tech-free time. We all understand that our phones and this world of technology. One of the greatest challenges to many of our relationships—whether it’s a husband and a wife or us with our kids—is technology. We are grateful for the access that it provides, but it also can disrupt families.

One writer / one study said that 60 percent of people can’t go an hour without checking their phones. We all need tech-free time. We all need to exam our relationships and say, “Okay, what’s a timeframe? What are the rules?” One couple has a little box at home, and everybody puts their phone or device there at a certain time; or when they have dinner, they all put them away.

Our kids need boundaries with technology because without it, they will struggle even connecting with others because of the impact of screen time and tech-time—not only tech-free

time, but also mealtime. There is something valuable about a date night. There is something valuable about a family meal together that allows us to talk and share and connect together.

There is something valuable about being able to have time where you can just spend uninterrupted time sharing and connecting with someone else. We need this. It builds our relationships. We need one-on-one time where fathers are dating their sons or their daughters / where we're taking it—it's this one-on-one time that's incredibly significant.

One of the things I think we've all discovered in life that sometimes when you're trying to build relationships—whether it's with your husband or your wife or your kids—sometimes, it's in those random moments while you're riding in the car that you find significant connection points when you least expect it; but it all requires that we have time together.

Here is the last one: some fun time together. There is something about fun that bonds us together. There is something about laughing together and sharing together and escaping together that allows us to build stronger and stronger relationships.

When my wife and I first got married, she said to me, "I want to take a family vacation every year." I said, "Oh, man, I did that as a kid. We went to visit Grandma every single summer." She said, "No, that doesn't count. That is not family vacation." She said, "Family vacation means you go and you do something fun; all right? It's not just visiting relatives. It's not just being at Grandma's house."

So, I am so thankful that every year we've been together, we've been able to do it—a family vacation—and it has brought so much joy to our home. It's made so many memories, and it's allowed us to bond because time together makes a tremendous difference in our relationships.

[Studio]

**Bob:** Well, we've been listening to Part One of a message from our friend Bryan Carter talking about the basics—the seven habits that are in healthy marriages and families. They are committed to God. They are committed to one another. They prioritize time together.

I saw a tweet recently from Pastor Ray Ortlund in Nashville. He just was exhorting families. He said, "Whatever else you have going on get a few days and have a family vacation." If you can't afford much, get a tent and go sleep in a tent. Do something because—here's the truth. Twenty years from now when your kids look back on growing up, vacations are a part of the indelible memories that are made together; aren't they?

**Dave:** We asked our kids—who are all grown and married and grandkids now—favorite memory growing up in our home. What did they say?

**Ann:** Always the vacations that we took, and they were all different. Sometimes, we couldn't afford much; but I'll never forget. We'd been married about five years. We were pregnant with our first son, and we were listening to Gary Smalley at a conference. He said, "I'm going to tell

you the number one secret to having a close-knit family.” We were sitting on the edge of seats, like—“Oh, what is the secret?” He said, “Camping.” We were like, “No; this is terrible!”

**Dave:** Yes; I remember we started doing that because what he said happens in camping. I remember his point was crises bring close-knit. The tent is going to break. It’s going to rain. You’re going to have things, and things are going to go wrong. You’re going to remember those memories because it’s not going to be exactly—

**Ann:** We didn’t really camp, though.

**Dave:** Yes; we did the RV. That was our camping.

**Ann:** That was much better.

**Dave:** But it was awesome. The transmission went out, and I’ve got to be honest, Bob. I did not want to do it. I was the tight wad who said, “I don’t want to spend money.” My wife said, “We’re going on vacations every year.” We did it, and they are some of our greatest memories.

**Bob:** So, our kids—if we had them together today, if I said to them, “Macon, Georgia”—

**Dave:** That’s all you’ve got to say?

**Bob:** That’s all I’ve got to say.

**Ann:** What happened?

**Bob:** They would say, “There’s no sympathy left for you.”

**Ann:** Oh no.

**Bob:** That is because Mary Ann was driving the kids. I was in Orlando. I had been speaking at a *Weekend to Remember*<sup>®</sup>. She was driving the kids from Little Rock to Orlando. We were going to spend a couple of days there after my speaking assignment; and she got caught in Atlanta traffic. She said, “It was dead still for an hour.” She was so frustrated, and the kids—this is after they’ve been in the car for eight or nine hours; right?

**Dave:** Oh boy!

**Bob:** I don’t remember what happened. Somebody spilled something, and they went like—“I spilled my jellybeans”—or something. Mary Ann just said, “There is no sympathy left for you.” [Laughter] Her kids were like—“What? Mom has finally snapped.” So, that’s kind of become a catch phrase. Today, we laugh about that.

**Dave:** Yes.

**Ann:** Right.

**Bob:** It's a great memory. Of course, at the time—

**Ann:** It wasn't funny.

**Bob:** —in Atlanta traffic, it was not funny; but it is those times of family closeness / intentional time together that you may not be laughing in the moment; but by God's grace, you'll be laughing years later.

**Michelle:** *FamilyLife Today* is a production of FamilyLife. And our goal is to develop godly families and marriages that change the world one home at a time. One of the ways we do that is through this radio broadcast, *FamilyLife Today*. We also partner with people around the world, people who share our same desire to see strong marriages and families and these people are sharing FamilyLife resources in their countries, maybe that's yours.

We have resources that may be helpful for you. On topics such as forgiveness, finances, honoring your parents and *FamilyLife's Art of Parenting*. You'll find information about these resources and others at FamilyLife.com. And, you can also email us [global@familylife.com](mailto:global@familylife.com) with any of your questions or concerns.

Thanks for listening. Thanks to Marques Holt, Dennis Leake, Rhonda Street and our entire broadcast team. We hope you've enjoyed the broadcast and that you will be back for another edition of *FamilyLife Today*.

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