

# FamilyLife Blended®

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

## Season 1, Episode 2: Life in a Blender

Guests: Dave and Ann Wilson

Air Date: April 1, 2019

---

**Dave:** I can remember when he showed up.

**Ann:** In college.

**Dave:** At a college football game and he hadn't been there. But I'm now on a full scholarship and I'm actually having a great season and he's reading about me down in Florida. He shows up. I didn't even know he was coming. I walk out of the locker room and there he is. And my mom. I literally came out excited, we'd won. I'd thrown touchdown pass-I don't know, I probably threw eight or nine touchdown passes.

[All laughing]

**Dave:** I don't know. I do remember walking out, it was a good game and being--I always love seeing my mom, but there's dad. I can remember, I can see it in my mind's eye right now walking out of the locker room, like, "What are you doing here?" Actually, honestly, "What the blank are you doing here?" I didn't say that to him—

**Ron:** It's what you're thinking, yes.

**Dave:** I don't want you here but I immediately went to, "Oh now you're going to show up." I connected all the dots. You're here because now you're reading about me and you're thinking I'm going to be, possibly making you some money playing after college so I was mad. He went to dinner with us that night. I'm like, "This is weird." Totally resentful.

**Ron:** Yes.

**Dave:** I covered it up. I was your All-American-quarterback-type kid, trying to put on the facade.

**Ron:** From the FamilyLife Podcast Network, this is FamilyLife Blended®. I'm Ron Deal. This podcast brings together timeless wisdom and practical help and hope to blended families and those who love them.

All of us have known somebody who's been through a divorce with kids. Maybe that's your situation. Well, have you ever wondered what your kid's experience is of your

divorce? And what if you get married and there's now a stepparent in their life? We're going to be talking about that today. Because 10-20% of all kids have a stepparent right now. A third will have by the time they're 18, and 50% of all of us in the United States will have a stepparent at some point in our lifetime.

Dave Wilson had a stepparent. Dave and his wife, Ann, have been leaders for the last thirty years at Kensington Church in Detroit. He's the former chaplain with the Detroit Lions. They've written a book together called *Vertical Marriage*. Most recently, they've become the hosts of the nationally syndicated program, FamilyLife Today.

The co-host to the program, Bob Lepine, joined me as I talked with Dave and Ann. I asked Dave to set the stage for us and tell us how he found out that his parents were divorcing.

**Dave:** It's interesting, it was the early 60's and back then I honestly don't remember a divorced family. I know in my elementary school I was the only kid in the classroom, 30-35 kids, with not a dad at home. Different day today but that was very unique. We lived in New Jersey at the time. I was born there. My dad was an airline pilot with Eastern Airlines. Anybody old enough in this room to remember Eastern?

**Ron:** I do remember them.

**Bob:** Sadly, yes.

**Dave:** So it was interesting at that time, even though I was very young, I didn't appreciate it, but we were sort of a wealthy family. He actually built homes on the side.

**Ron:** Okay.

**Dave:** In a gated-community in New Jersey. Flew out of New York. So I grew up sort of in a big house with two older brothers and a sister, they were actually 10 to 12 to 14 year older than me. And then a little brother about a year and a half younger than me. At that time you would have looked at our family, the Wilson's were like the perfect American family.

**Ron:** From the outside it looked really good.

**Dave:** Really, really good. Wealthy. Nice home. Again gated community, it just looked like a perfect marriage. I actually thought that as a little kid. It's interesting, I've blocked a lot of this out. It's hard sometimes to even remember. But I do remember: fights, yelling, a lot of alcohol. I remember my brothers taking me and my sister away from the family room upstairs to get away from the fights between mom and dad.

My dad was a drinker. He wasn't a happy drunk, he was a mean, sort of would get out of control. That's what I remember as a little boy.

**Ron:** So you had three older siblings and one younger sibling, right?

**Dave:** Yes.

**Ron:** So there's five of you. You're number four in the picture.

**Dave:** My mom called it "four jacks and a queen." I remember her saying that growing up.

**Ron:** [Laughing] That's good.

**Dave:** Four boys and a little girl.

**Ron:** You mentioned from the outside your family looked really good. I wonder sometimes children's experience of their family prior to a divorce, a break up is, "Well yeah, we're really good." You remember some hard things, some fights but looking back are you one of those kids, you just didn't see it coming?

**Dave:** Oh I did not see it coming. In fact, the night it happened was Christmas Eve. The whole family went to church. I mean it's one of these picturesque moments, I can see snow falling, walking in at the midnight mass type deal. It was probably 10 or 11 o'clock at night. My little brother Craig and I got baptized that night. The whole family's there.

We all come back to the house-again big house- we walk in and while we were gone, Santa had shown up I thought and the entire family room was just presents everywhere, more presents than I'd ever seen in my life. We were told, "Open them. Tonight, not tomorrow, tonight."

So of course a little 5/6/7 year old kid is just ripping things apart and every gift I could ever imagine we got that year. You can imagine, "Why?" I didn't know. The next morning, Christmas Day, woke up, Dad was gone. It was his last hurrah. The church service, the baptism, the gifts, were sort of, "See ya later."

Of course we woke up Christmas morning and I can remember sort of asking my mom, "Where's Dad?" and that's when she said, "Well, he's gone." Of course I didn't know *forever* but eventually I realized and my little brother, he's gone. We didn't really know what the word divorce meant but eventually that is what it ended up being. We were without a dad.

**Ron:** Do you remember any particular emotions at that point in time? I know you're still making sense of it, you're seven/six something around that age range. And it's hard sometimes to make sense of things when you're that age. But looking back do you remember any particular emotions that stood out?

**Dave:** Again, a lot of it I don't remember. I didn't get angry. I was discouraged. I just remember thinking, "In one way, well he'll be back, he's not gone, gone." But I do remember over time, he didn't come back, he didn't come back and when he did it was pop in/pop out. I can remember fights again. It was not a fun moment when he would come in.

I also remember he also didn't seem to pay any attention to me and Craig. He was there to talk to my mom, whatever and go. They were obviously, I know now they were still working through the details what this is going to look like but he was off.

I found out later he was off with girlfriends. He had mistresses. I didn't know until I was probably 28-30 years old. I'm looking over at Ann because she was part of the world now as my sister told me, "I don't know if you know this but Dad used to take you and Craig on vacations with his girlfriends when he was still married to mom.

**Ron:** Wow.

**Dave:** You know I was five, four, six years old.

**Ron:** Yes.

**Dave:** What are you talking-- I didn't remember any of that. But we would go on trips with Dad's mistresses.

**Ron:** So just really quickly, fast forward to 28-30 years of age, you find out there's more to the betrayal.

**Dave:** Oh! I found out a lot more.

**Ron:** Yes.

**Ann:** I think it's interesting Ron, one of the big pieces that Dave didn't mention was something that happened to his brother very soon after the divorce.

**Dave:** Yes, well, I mean the short story is my mom now is a single mom. Again back in the '60s not a whole lot of help for her. She's like, "How am I going to rebuild my life?" My two brothers and older sister were off to college and beyond, so they were that much older, so it was really mom and myself and Craig. We moved to Ohio, why Ohio? That's where her parents lived. We moved to get help and start a new life. So that's traumatic.

**Ron:** Yes.

**Dave:** Again that's the only thing I've known is my really nice home. So we move. I do remember the drive. Talk about traumatic, you would think nothing but at that time I had

a dog I loved, a German shepherd named, Sarge. Somehow he didn't make it to Ohio. Again, I lose my dad, lose the marriage, and then probably I don't know exact time line, 3-4 months later we find out Craig has leukemia.

**Ron:** Wow.

**Dave:** And within 6 weeks he dies. There's no bone marrow transplants back then. It was very quick and obviously traumatic as I walk through the divorce, the move, and now my best friend, my little brother's gone. And it's just mom and I.

**Ron:** Okay, so let me just recap what I'm hearing. And by the way, Bob, I'll just mention that we have a resource at FamilyLife called *Life in a Blender*. It's written for children who are living in a stepfamily to help them make sense of their life and some of the things they experience. One of the things that we talk about are the big five emotions: loss and sadness are two of those.

So let's just recap this story that we have so far. Life was one thing prior to dad leaving, but once he left and the divorce took place it was a cascade of loss for you. Different home, different family income level, mom and dad are not together, when dad's back he's really not tuning into you. You've lost him even when he's there.

There's confusion and discouragement. So move to a new place, lose your dog in the process and then a huge loss for the family was the loss of your younger brother.

I'm just sitting here taking that in from your vantage point, I'm listening to all the transition and the pain that goes along with that and how heavy that is. I'm also aware that your mother who is the primary caregiver to you at that point in time has gone through tremendous, tremendous loss herself.

**Dave:** Right.

**Ron:** I have lost a child. So I know what that is to be in her shoes, losing a child. To have that on top of loss of her marriage, loss of her family, loss of position, friends, place of work, all the stuff that's wrapped into that. I can't imagine how your mom functioned.

So let's go inside that a little bit for you. What was parenting like at that point in your life? What was your relationship with your mom? How did that morph and change? How did you survive all of this together?

**Dave:** You know my mom was everything. I clung to her. She was my security obviously. I felt like she did the same with me. We only had each other, at that point after Craig-y was gone. So yes, loved her dearly, I always felt loved by her. She was my biggest cheerleader, my whole life. But I can remember even as I hit 10 and 12 and 13 just watching the sadness. She was very lonely. Felt that in the home. Wanted to be

there for her, wanted to help her. I remember constantly she would say, "You're the man of the house."

**Ron:** [Agrees]

**Dave:** I'm 12, and I'm like, "I don't want to be the man of the house." But I had to be so--

**Ron:** What do you mean "had to be"? Unpack that for a minute.

**Dave:** I mean, there was nobody else there. There was no other man. She dated a little bit but nobody really walked into our life.

**Ron:** So there was a strong sense of obligation and responsibility in you.

**Dave:** Yes.

**Ron:** Not necessarily something you really chose or would have chosen but you knew if you didn't do it--

**Dave:** Right.

**Ron:** Let's paint that scenario for a second because sometimes that's helpful to even understand how you ended up making some of the choices you made as a kid. Like what if I don't do this for mom, what would've happened?

**Dave:** I really felt like she needed me to be strong.

**Ron:** [Agrees]

**Dave:** Again, 13, 12. As I went into middle school and high school, I felt like she's stable but instable. I can't be instable. This really is a counseling session. [Laughs]

**Bob:** Do you think your relationship with her ever got unhealthy? Was she ever codependent? Was there ever a situation where she was counting on you for more than a mom ought to be counting on a 12-year-old boy?

**Dave:** I'm wondering what my wife's thinking right now.

**Bob:** She just moved up to the microphone because I think she's got an answer for us.

**Dave:** I didn't even look over there, did you notice that. I didn't even want to see what she's going to say. I think I know what she's going to say.

**Ann:** Yes. I think that the answer to that would be yes. I think she was so broken, so lonely, so hurting. I remember Dave's stepmom telling me--this is an interesting just side note--that Dave went on the honeymoon of his dad and stepmom.

**Dave:** To Europe. You know as a pilot, I could fly free with them.

**Ron:** Yes, sure.

**Ann:** And she was in the airline too so she said he couldn't sleep by himself. She realized that Dave had been sleeping with his mom. And he was what-12?

**Dave:** I think I was 12.

**Ann:** Yes.

**Dave:** You know, sort of funny, I didn't know my dad's on a honeymoon with his new wife. I just thought we were going on a trip. I found that out years later. Because Biata, that's my stepmother, she was like, "Do you realize that on our honeymoon night you came walking in our hotel room--" I had a hotel room across the hall, of course we're in Europe and I'm scared anyway."

**Ron:** Yes.

**Ann:** Any kid would be.

**Dave:** But I go knocking on the door, saying, "Can I sleep in here?" Sort of funny now but that gives you an idea of where I was, where they were.

**Ron:** Sure.

**Dave:** And yes, I grew up--

**Ann:** It was appropriate, like there wasn't anything inappropriate that happened sleeping with his mom.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Ron:** Yes. It just represented that's what you were used to at that point in time.

**Ann:** Yes.

**Ron:** You know, my comment about your mom is of course there was this strong, deeply-connected reliance on her son. I don't know how you survived that sort of loss.

**Dave:** Right.

**Ron:** That mount Kilimanjaro of loss without finding something you hold on to. Right? So of course that was the nature of your relationship. Of course you felt a great sense of responsibility and obligation to her and I think sometimes it's easy for us to step outside people's lives and just judge that, "What? You were sleeping--"

**Dave:** Yes.

**Ron:** Somehow you were overly connected. You know what, that's a little bit of God's grace for people sometimes. When you get behind it and you understand how much loss is in this story nobody wants more loss.

That's one of the things we know about kids in blended families. They don't want more loss. Yet it seems that sometimes, every little turn every little twist becomes a little bit more loss so you go with your dad and you find out that was him investing in somebody else, not really investing in me, like, I'm there but we're not connected. So that's an ongoing narrative that gets in the way.

I'm curious about that, your relationship with your dad through your adolescent years. What was that like?

**Dave:** You know it was pretty nonexistent. He would fly up to Ohio on a trip or whatever and I don't know exact timeline but I saw him maybe once or twice a year for a day. Or really an evening, and again--

**Ann:** He would fly down at Christmas.

**Dave:** Yes. But when he would come up it would usually get ugly. He would drink, he would get loud. I'd go hide in the bedroom, wait until it's over. Till the storm cleared, so that was my experience with my dad. I remember that in middle school, then high school.

Then I hated this, right after the divorce, seven, eight, nine years old, I for whatever reason had to go see my dad at Christmas. I would fly do Miami, Florida, now he's in Miami flying out on Christmas morning. From winter wonderland in Ohio to palm trees in Florida by myself.

Back then nobody flew on Christmas day so the flight attendants I could tell they felt sorry for me, they'd let me sit in first class, nobody on the plane. They would be assigned to me, to take care of this little boy getting him to his dad.

I can remember getting in his car, nice car, rich, you know living the life and looking at these palm trees going, "What am I doing here? I don't want to be here. I want to be home. I want to be in Ohio. I want to be at my home on Christmas and I have to go see my dad for three or four days." So it was a trip or two and then Christmas every year.

**Ron:** I'm hearing some of those other big five emotions: confusion, like, "Here I am, I have to do this, but I don't want to do this." And then when I get here, I realize how much he has financially, etcetera, and I'm aware.

**Ann:** And you had nothing back with your mom.

**Ron:** Right. Mom and I got nothing. What a contrast. Again it's because he left us.

**Dave:** Right.

**Ron:** Yes?

**Dave:** Oh yes.

**Ron:** I mean there had to be some real anger or hurt towards him.

**Dave:** One of the reasons I blocked having a relationship. I really think he wanted one and he was doing what he could to do that. I mean he wasn't there a lot but when we were together I could tell, I really did have a sense, "He loves me. He really does love me. He wants good for me."

Almost a sense I think he feels bad about what happened. But we never talked about it, through high school through college, until we got married, never once was there a conversation with dad about the divorce about any of that. There were many with my mom. Now she wasn't a mean, bitter, your-dad's-an-idiot type mom. She honored him but I was confused. I never really understood it.

**Bob:** And no trust. You couldn't have trusted your dad, that's a reason there's no relationship.

**Dave:** Right.

**Bob:** He left when you were seven.

**Dave:** Right.

**Bob:** What are you going to trust him with trying to have a relationship with? No, that doesn't make any sense.

**Dave:** Right.

**Ron:** I'm also wondering about, yes loyalty to mom. I mean how would you have felt if you'd have drawn close to your dad, like, "Mom needs me. Mom's relying on me." Like I that would be in a way putting her in jeopardy.

**Bob:** Treasonous.

**Dave:** I also felt that when Dad got remarried. I felt like I can't like her because that's--

**Ann:** Betrayal.

**Dave:** Betrayal to my mom.

**Ron:** To your mom, yes.

**Dave:** My mom would ask, when I would go home, "How's Biata?" And I'd be like, "She's okay."

**Ron:** Isn't that interesting, all she had to do was ask what could be a very neutral question on the surface but it very much isn't neutral in your heart.

**Dave:** Right.

**Ron:** I mean even if she's not really saying, "Do you love her?"

**Dave:** Right.

**Ron:** You felt like she was saying, "You love her." So you're in this love conflict that Mom needs me, she's got nothing but me so I'm definitely favoring here.

**Bob:** We've touched on these five emotions that you talk about. Just list them for us, what are the five?

**Ron:** They are: Loss, and the sadness that goes along with that loss, right, those are related.

Fear, we've heard that, we haven't talked about it yet. But it's the fear of more loss, fear of in this case the fear of hurting Mom if I enjoy my stepmom. Fear of hurting Mom if I enjoy my dad and draw close to him.

Guilt, the sense of responsibility that you had toward your mom is one example of, "Boy I feel guilty if I don't fulfill that responsibility so it's going to change who I am, how I act, and how I live my life.

Then the confusion piece of, "How do I deal with all this? What does it mean? Why did Dad leave? What does this mean for me and the future of our family and relationship?" Just a lot of confusion.

**Bob:** And the booklet, it's really a small book--

**Ron:** It is.

**Bob:** --that you've written for kids, helps them unpack these emotions and put names to these emotions so they can go, "Oh this is--I'm not abnormal because of the things I'm feeling--"

**Ron:** Right.

**Bob:** "--and maybe I can even understand what it is I'm feeling and put some categories to it rather than just feeling it."

**Ann:** And as a parent, Ron, is that our responsibility to ask those questions? Is this a counseling situation?

**Ron:** I'm so glad you brought that out because there's a secondary purpose in this booklet. We actually have a parent discussion guide with it. So that parents are moving towards the heart of their child, the experience of their child. We want to give the kids words to help them go, "Yeah, that is what I'm feeling."

We also want to help the parents say, "Is that what you're feeling? Is this your experience?" We give them a little, a few questions for parents to ask their child after they read it so you can move toward their heart. What we're doing here today with Dave is what we would love to see happen thousands of times around the world one parent towards their own child.

**Dave:** Ah, if this would've been around when I was ten years old, oh my gosh. There was nothing like this.

**Ron:** Yes.

You know one of the things that's interesting is that we haven't talked about it yet, is how you coped with all of this. I've heard you in the past in different venues say different things. So, let me just toss a couple of words at you.

**Dave:** Okay.

**Ron:** I'm not exactly sure these are right and you can comment on those.

**Dave:** All right.

**Ron:** I heard you say you were jealous of your dad's new wife and they had a--or she had a son, I believe, so you had a stepbrother.

**Dave:** Yes, I had a stepbrother.

**Ron:** Okay, so a little jealous of how dad spent time and invested in them, his new family and not in you.

**Dave:** Right.

**Ron:** So it made it hard for you to move toward them so part of your coping was to just withdraw and retreat, stay away.

**Dave:** Oh definitely, I stayed away. I really lived in a little cocoon with my mom up in Ohio. My dad would come in every once in a while. I didn't want to go down and see them now in Miami. Again I was so sad and felt betrayed and abandoned.

**Ron:** [Agrees]

**Dave:** I did. It was sort of mandated I go see them. I'm glad I did now, but wasn't something I looked forward to.

**Bob:** Did you have any kind of relationship with your stepbrother?

**Dave:** Very little. I can remember as we got into high school and college age we would go out and party.

**Ann:** He lived--

**Dave:** That's what I remember.

**Ann:** He lived full time with his dad in Taran.

**Bob:** The stepbrother did?

**Ann:** Yes.

**Dave:** Yes.

**Ron:** So again he had your dad, you didn't.

**Dave:** Yes. A little bit. My dad didn't have a great relationship with me or his stepson. Really didn't. Didn't get a lot of time with either one of us.

**Ron:** Is that what you guys started bonding about when you started drinking?

**Dave:** Sort of.

**Ron:** Yes.

**Dave:** We'd go out and yes, I really liked him, he was a good kid. You know but I didn't want to like him

**Bob:** Yes.

**Ron:** Yes. Exactly, that's that loyalty thing that we've already talked about. There's some guilt in there, you didn't want to move away from Mom. You didn't want to hurt or jeopardize that relationship with her.

So let's connect some dots. When you feel abandoned and hurt and betrayed and you're worried about your mother and concerned about her, you retreat from some people, you move toward other people, in this case your mom to kind of protect and honor that relationship.

**Ann:** And I would say too, Ron, Dave had a full life and became really obsessed a little bit with sports. He was good at it.

**Ron:** [Agrees] He threw himself into that.

**Dave:** Is that possible to be obsessed with sports?

**Ron:** Absolutely.

**Dave:** I don't think so.

**Ann:** Oh it wasn't an obsession.

**Ron:** Okay, now we're doing a program on denial.

[All laughing]

**Bob:** And idolatry it sounds like.

**Dave:** I don't know what you guys are talking about.

**Ann:** This is so good.

**Ron:** So yes, perfectionism, not necessarily perfect but excelling at something that gives you worth.

**Dave:** Right.

**Ron:** Like, "I can't get it over here. This is a mess, that's confusing but man I can do this and I can be really good and matter."

So this is where we turn to Ann.

**Dave:** Good.

**Ron:** We've noticed some themes in Dave's life and understandably so. When you get hurt and abandoned, rejected, keep your loyalties tight where it's good and be distant where it's not good. In moments of distress, pull away, back up, excel at something, have something you're really good at and throw yourself 100% into that thing and do it great because that's part of giving you identity and meaning, purpose in life.

Did any of that carry over into your marriage?

**Ann:** Yes, I think that the biggest repercussion was the ability to resolve conflict in our relationship. And I was 19 when we got married, Dave was 22, so we weren't thinking about our past, we weren't thinking all these things would affect our present and yet we would have our fights and he would leave.

That wasn't my style, I grew up in a family that we would talk about everything. We even yell at each other but still feel secure in the love. So we'd talk about everything, so when Dave would walk out of the room, it would make me furious. Not thinking, not even having the thought, "Well of course he would leave and withdraw because conflict is a bad thing to him."

**Ron:** Right.

**Dave:** I'm not even connecting those dots. She would follow me into the kitchen or wherever and say, "We've got to talk." And I would--

**Ron:** That probably just made it worse.

**Ann:** Yes, worse.

**Dave:** I would be just, "Get out of here. What are we doing?" Now I know I had this belief about conflict: it's bad, you avoid it at all costs.

**Ron:** Right.

**Dave:** It ended in divorce.

**Ann:** I remember sitting on this bed. He'd left and he went upstairs, he closed the bedroom door and he sat on the bed and I open the bedroom door, and I sit right beside him and I put my hand on his leg and I looked at him and said, "We just need to talk." And he just said, "What are you doing? Get out of here!" And I didn't know what to do.

**Ron:** So there's a mechanism in him that he grew up doing a lot of so of course he just continued to need to do that and that is: in the face of distress and conflict and a really hard situation, you just withdraw, you pull away, you retreat, you go back to where it's safe. And it wasn't safe to be with you in the conflict so of course he would retreat.

But I can totally see how from your point of view, family, we stay engaged we talk this out even if it's hard, we stay. That must have meant that he doesn't love me or something. You said a minute ago, "I would get furious." I'm wondering if you were really afraid. "He's leaving."

**Ann:** To be truthful, I wasn't afraid he would leave, but I looked upon him--I think I disrespected it. I thought, "What kind of a man leaves?" I had a strong father and to me it appeared to be weakness. Think about how that related to Dave. Oh my gosh what a horrible thing for me to relay to him, "I think you're weak." Which made him withdraw even more.

**Ron:** Exactly. It just lead to more of it. So if he's weak, what's the follow up to that? If he's weak, then what?

**Dave:** I like you're getting counseling now. [Laughs] This is sort of fun.

**Ron:** Turn around's fair play.

**Ann:** [pauses] I'm not sure what I'd think of that. If he's weak maybe it means I have to become strong. Who will be the strong one in the family? How will he lead me? How will he lead us?

**Ron:** We're not safe and secure...

**Ann:** Right.

**Ron:** ...if he's weak. And there's the fear.

**Ann:** [Agrees]

**Ron:** So there's this huge looming thing that says, "Oh no this is going to get bad, this is going to get worse. I don't know how we're going to get safe and secure, I've got to get mad so he won't be that way anymore." So furious is how it came out but fear is what was underneath that.

**Ann:** You're right and I think I would push his buttons.

**Ron:** Yes.

**Ann:** To get a reaction. Anything was better than silence.

**Ron:** To try to get him to not be weak.

**Ann:** Exactly.

**Ron:** And isn't that ironic?

**Ann:** Right.

**Dave:** And that worked really well Ron.

**Ron:** Did it?

**Dave:** Yes.

**Ron:** [Laughing] I bet it did.

**Dave:** No, it did not go well. We've shared how hard our first year was in marriage many times it's in our marriage book and a lot of it was right here.

**Ann:** Yes.

**Dave:** I had no idea how the past was coming like a bag of luggage into my marriage. Ann had no idea. She's a strong woman and she was pushing and I was leaving.

**Ron:** Yes.

**Dave:** You know, whether I went to another room or literally just emotionally shut down—again not connecting any of these dots, it took years.

**Ron:** Right.

**Dave:** We connected them eventually but that's where we started.

**Ron:** This is why Bob, I always say, "You're always working on your marriage because God is always using your marriage to work on you." You know there's so much about ourselves we don't know until marriage forces us to look below the surface and to wrestle with the deep, deep stuff.

I know we have listeners right now going, "Oh my word, that's us. I get furious but I'm really fearful of something, what is that?" And they are doing self-examination in a really healthy way. That's what God wants, is to mature us through our marriages. Of course if we leave, of course if we stop, if we abandon or divorce or just check out we never do the hard work and we never grow up. But when we do, we end up in a totally different place.

So let's have fun with this.

**Bob:** [laughs]

**Dave:** Is this fun Ron?

[all laughing]

**Ron:** This is great.

**Ann:** It's fun for Ron.

**Ron:** Let me ask the two of you to talk to that younger self, that 19-, 20-, 22-year-old person who all they knew to do was get furious. All they knew to do was retreat, but had no idea why. If you could coach them, what would you say to that younger self at this point?

**Dave:** What I know now, I wish that I would have known then and it is this you are loved. You are actually secure even if it's only your mom's love you can feel at this point or see tangibly, it's real. And there's a heavenly Father that's there even though your earthly father you can't see it or feel it. I didn't know that then, I wish I'd have known that then. And you don't have to become your dad.

**Ron:** Yes.

**Dave:** In many ways, my withdraw even that I brought into my marriage is a copy of the sins of the father. I'd never read the Bible, I didn't know that was actually in there. When I saw it, it was like an indictment on my life, like, "Oh my gosh, the man I don't want to become, I'm becoming."

**Ron:** Yes.

**Dave:** In many different ways. That could have been avoided if I had known I was truly, truly loved, I just didn't know it.

**Ron:** That would have given you a source--

**Dave:** A foundation.

**Ron:** To hold onto. A foundation to help you perhaps to calm down in the midst all that chaos and anger and conflict with Ann. And stay engaged rather than retreat like Dad did.

**Dave:** Exactly.

**Ann:** I think I would have--if I was sitting across from me--I would have reminded myself that marriage is this beautiful agony.

It's beautiful in the fact that you learn how to love someone unconditionally and that doesn't come naturally or easily. The agony is it's a mirror.

**Ron:** Yes.

**Ann:** And it's showing you your weaknesses and flaws. I think before I got married I would have never, I would have never thought that I would be an angry person and I would ever yell. I'm so laid back, I'm chill. And this person came out like, "Who am I?" She was always deep down there it was just the pressure of marriage exposed it.

So, I think I would have told myself, "Be patient, and don't be surprised." Here's the biggest thing, "Don't expect Dave to meet all of my needs, and don't expect Dave to be just like you." There was a part of me that thought, "This is how you should do it. What are you going? Of course he shouldn't--"

It's beautiful the way God made Dave. Us having to figure out this whole conflict resolution pattern became one of the best things in our marriage. So I would say, "Take your time. Don't be surprised at the baggage you're going to discover, but be looking and then go to God, and say, 'God I can't do this. Give me wisdom.'" James 1 says: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God and He gives generously to anyone who asks."

**Ron:** You've been listening to my conversation with Bob Lepine, and Ann and Dave Wilson. I'm Ron Deal and this is FamilyLife Blended.

You know Dave's advice to his younger self, he needed to know that he was truly loved. Isn't that something we all feel? And kids in particular, they're going through a really hard transition in their life, parent's divorce, transition into a single-parent household, transition into a blended family household.

Kids need to be reassured every step along the way that they're loved. We all just need to hear that, especially in times when life is uncertain, things seem to be coming apart. Don't take that for granted. Don't assume that your kids know that you love them. They need to hear it over and over. You can't say, "I love you" too much.

If you'd like more information on our guests, you'll find it in our show notes. Check it out on the FamilyLife Blended page at [FamilyLife.com/podcasts](http://FamilyLife.com/podcasts).

We really want to hear from you. Your feedback means a lot to us. Positive online reviews, well that means a lot to us as well. Subscribe to this podcast on iTunes or stitcher or wherever it is that you find your podcasts. Just search FamilyLife Blended

with Ron Deal and remember to look at the show notes for details, links to additional resources and learn about our other podcasts on the FamilyLife Podcast Network.

And maybe if you like what you hear you'll help us spread the word because you are our marketing department. Think of a couple of friends that you think could benefit from this, maybe a pastor, a ministry leader, then share the podcast with them. And if you're so inclined maybe you could post something nice on social media about this podcast. We'd really appreciate it.

We know you're invested in your marriage and family so be sure to check out Blended and Blessed. It's our one-day live stream event specifically designed for blended family couples. You can join us live in Minneapolis or be part of the virtual audience on your smartphone, your laptop. It's very easy to stream this for just \$19. Your church can host this for a group of couples for just \$99.

I'm going to be there and so will Dave and Ann Wilson. They're going to be speaking for us that day along with Chris Brooks and others. It'll be a great event. I hope you'll join us. For more information just go to [BlendedandBlessed.com](http://BlendedandBlessed.com)

**Ron:** Next time, my recent conversation with Shaunti Feldhahn reveals there is good news about the bad news about marriage.

**Shaunti:** I was a columnist and trying to do a column on divorce and I wanted to correctly state the divorce rate. So, as I started looking at the numbers from the census bureau and the CDC and vital statistics. The numbers I was seeing didn't match the narrative. We're killing marriages with this discouragement unnecessarily. That's a big deal. Join us next time on FamilyLife Blended.

I'm Ron Deal. Thanks for listening. Thanks to our legacy partners for making this podcast possible.

*FamilyLife Blended* is produced by FamilyLife and is a part of the FamilyLife Podcast Network.

---

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 © 2019 FamilyLife. All rights reserved.

[www.FamilyLife.com](http://www.FamilyLife.com)