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Loving on Purpose

This is Stay Happily Married #132, "Loving on Purpose."

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Lee Rosen:

I'm Lee Rosen and I'm your host today. Welcome to the show. We're here today in the studio with Dennis Yanke, possibly a familiar voice to you. I hope that he is; hopefully you've listened to his earlier show. He's going to tell us today about how to love on purpose, to stop leaving things to chance and to get the most out of your relationships.

Dennis is a veteran financial planner and a speaker who has figured out how to apply his personal values approach to relationships as well. He's the author of *Love your Wife, Get Better Sex*, which he spoke about on the show last time he joined us. And if you haven't listened to that one, you ought to go back and listen to it. It's a classic *Stay Happily Married* episode.

He and his wife Pat have been happily married for 30 years. They have three grown children. And though he lives in Canada, we're really excited to have him down here in Raleigh again. He came to the studio last time; he's here again. This is becoming a regular stop on his travels.

Dennis, welcome back to the show.

Dennis Yanke:

Thanks very much, Lee.

Lee Rosen: Well, it's great to have you. And I want to talk about this idea of loving on purpose. Let's just dig right in from the beginning. When you say "love on purpose," what do you mean?

Dennis Yanke: Well, it's interesting. If you look at other aspects of your life -- you're a lawyer. When you go to a case either in court or against other lawyers in face-to-face, you have a plan. You have a method. You've got everything developed. You know exactly what you're going to do before you get there. And most times you know the answers to every question that you ask before you actually ask the question.

I'm a business person. I have a strategic plan for the company. I follow it through. I make sure that it works. I know what the landmarks are, the benchmarks. And when things don't work, we make the course corrections. And when we do work, then we amplify what works.

It's interesting in marriage we don't really do any of those things. We think about as far as getting to the altar or in front of the judge and we stand there and we make that commitment -- by the way, the only commitment that we make to anybody else of our choosing, right? Because remember, you don't choose your kids and you don't get to choose your parents, but we choose you. I choose you to live with and make this lifelong commitment to you.

We get out of the marriage -- or out of the wedding. The honeymoon is all planned. Get back from the honeymoon and then that's pretty much it. We just -- it's all kind of random acts from that point on. And I think that if we get away from that whole randomness of what the relationship is all about and start doing some strategic planning around it, it makes more sense for our marriages.

Lee Rosen: You're right. You know, it's fascinating because I really did -- thinking back to when we got married, it was like the planning of it all consumed us and there really was no plan for what to do -- we knew we were headed out on the honeymoon. But the minute after that it was like, okay, we're into the abyss and there really is no agenda and no plan at all.

So you're really suggesting that people take a much more -- take the same approach they take to everything else that matters in their life, I guess. At least, a lot of people take those kinds of serious approaches. I mean, you're saying do what you do with the rest of your life but do it in your marriage.

Dennis Yanke: Exactly. And I think a lot of us pattern ourselves after our parents. But if you're one of the 52 or 53 percent whose parents have divorced, that's probably not the pattern that you want to follow. So you need to figure out what's going to work for you and your spouse and work that plan right through. And you need to think about that every day.

Lee Rosen: Okay. So what's the opposite of this? What kind of things are you seeing in relationships where the partners aren't making these kinds of efforts, dealing with this kind of a plan? What's the fallout?

Dennis Yanke: It's interesting that the opposite of love is not hate. Most people think that, but hate is an emotion and there's a reason -- and hate is always a secondary emotion; there's something else that's prompted that idea of hate.

So in a relationship I think the worst thing that can happen is "I don't care what you do; I don't care what you say." Antipathy. The whole "it doesn't really matter what you do." And I think that's where a lot of relationships go because I do my thing, you do your thing, we go along and then the kids come along and we're doing for the kids and we forget to do for each other.

And then you get to a point in the relationship where you say, "Well, what am I getting out of it?" And as soon as we get to "what am I getting out of it," the relationship is in real serious trouble because you can never be selfish about a relationship. It's never about what I get out; it's always about what I put in. And when you start putting stuff back into the relationship, that's when you're loving on purpose.

Lee Rosen: Okay. So that makes a lot of sense. So loving on purpose is really about planning what you're going to contribute to the marriage. In the same way that you would plan how you're going to add value at work that day?

Dennis Yanke: Right. But I think it's deeper than that. Because think back to when you were dating, that lovely young thing that you were dating, and think about how many times you thought about her during the day, right? Some random thing would occur and you'd think about her, right? You wouldn't even know what caused it, but you'd think about it. And the reason that you thought about her was because you were loving her.

So if we kept thinking about our spouses in that way after we got married, those random things would still occur. I know for me, if I'm driving in a car and I see a particularly brilliant morning sunrise

or sunset or three rainbows that happen after a rain storm, I always think, "This could only be better if Pat was sitting here beside me."

So when you have that intentional purpose of loving on purpose, what happens is it's like the whole world opens up and other things just flow into your life and you have that phenomenal feeling of love and respect and everything else that goes into making a relationship strong.

Lee Rosen: So is that really the key? I mean, when you talk about people sort of planning how they're going to love on purpose, is that what we ought to be doing or is there more to it?

Dennis Yanke: I think that what you need to do until you get to the point where it becomes automatic, where it gets to be a habit, is you have to intentionally think about your spouse. And it's not really hard work. I've had a lot of interviewers say, "Well, that sounds like hard work."

But if you think about it, when you are thinking on purpose about your wife, it's fun, right? Because you think, oh, you know what? She really likes this special whatever, and you go and do that special whatever and you have fun when you're doing it. You have fun when you're thinking about it. You have fun when you're in a conversation with somebody else and you say, "Oh, I've got to tell my wife that because she'd really enjoy that thought." All of that stuff -- it's like a whole mind change.

And let me give you the opposite. The last time you were in a conversation with somebody, what were the majority of the things that you talked about? Okay? It probably was, "I don't like the weather" or "I do like the weather;" "I don't like what's going on with so-and-so;" or "So-and-so did this and I would have done it that way. And all of a sudden you get all this negative stuff flowing along.

And it's so easy for us to be critical of others. And the psychologists will tell you that the reason we do that is to make ourselves look better, right? We're always inward-focused on that.

If you change your conversation and have your conversation about positives in other people's lives -- "I really like what you said there." "The way you're thinking is really interesting. Can you explain that more?" If you go positives instead of focusing on negatives, what happens is you're now becoming intentional.

And I really believe that if you do that in your own marriage it's going to spill over in every other relationship you have and people will be attracted to you because you will be a center of light. You'll be a center of purpose. And you'll do more to change the world around you than anything else that you could do.

Lee Rosen: Right. That sounds -- I really like the way that sounds. No one wants to be the center of darkness.

Dennis Yanke: No.

Lee Rosen: Yeah. It's a very appealing vision that you're giving people. Sitting here thinking about it as you talked and I do think about some of the things that I -- occasionally -- I mean, every year you have birthdays and anniversaries and holidays. You're buying gifts for your spouse and dealing with all these things and it's so hard to bat 1.000. I mean, I think you're lucky to bat .100 in this.

But that every so often when you nail it, when you've done something that your spouse really is going to love, it is so exciting to be that giver of that thing.

And it does feel a little bit like what you're saying is, hey, you don't have to do it once in a blue moon; you can be thinking about this day in, day out, and be batting maybe not 1.000 but closer to it. You have an opportunity. You don't have to wait for the holidays to do something special. But that really does add energy.

Dennis Yanke: It does. And think about if you had no money. If you have nothing to spare to buy a gift for your spouse, what's the most important thing that you can give them?

Lee Rosen: Right.

Dennis Yanke: And it's that intimate contact. Look at people today. Everyone is plugged into their computer or they've got a cell phone in their hands or they're texting. We've got more ways of exchanging information the whole time and it's a voracious need that everybody has to communicate.

We choose to get married. We make that commitment for the rest of our lives. And why do we do that? It's not just to have sex. I mean, you can have -- recreational sex is the rigneur de jour today, in this day and age. So what you really want to do is you really want that place of communication.

But the place of communication with your spouse is that place where you know that no matter what you say your spouse is going to hold you in her heart. And there's a safety place there. It feels good. And what's more important, if I'm communicating with you and you're my spouse and I tell you my innermost feelings and desires and fears, that place of communication, that moment that we get to -- and it doesn't have to happen every day -- but that moment we get to is a moment where every spouse wants to get to. That's the ultimate in communication. And so that's the present that you can give each other on a regular basis.

And I'm not talking -- I mean, a lot of guys -- "Oh, Dennis, you get so feeling about all of this stuff. I want to just watch the football game." But really, at the end of the day --

And I've done this a number of times in classroom settings where you ask all the guys to write down what the most important thing is on a list and ask all the girls to write down the most important thing on a list and then ask them what each other thinks the most important thing is. The ladies all think the guys' most important thing is sex, right? Sex is always on the list with the guys but guess what the number one thing is with the guys?

Lee Rosen: I don't know. I would have guessed it was sex.

Dennis Yanke: Yeah. It's I want to have that intimate communication.

Lee Rosen: Right.

Dennis Yanke: We're so alone in this world. All we want is to have someone that we can have that intimate communication with.

Lee Rosen: So you're talking to people -- you're talking to thousands of people and giving these ideas and advice. How are you seeing what you're teaching improve people's marriages?

Dennis Yanke: I can give you real practical -- we had a couple over to our house and you could tell there had been a fight in the car on the way over.

Lee Rosen: Right. You can feel it in the air.

Dennis Yanke: Oh, absolutely. They weren't talking -- anyway. I got her alone because I knew that -- you know, I knew the couple really well. I got her alone and I said, "Tell me what the problem is. What's going on?" And I listened to the list of stuff. And it was the usual laundry list of stuff between couples. And so I let her vent, I let her get it all

out because I knew she wasn't looking for an answer to those problems. Let her talk it out.

Finally, when she ran out of gas I asked her one simple question. I said, "Why did you marry John?" And she looked at me. And I could see the processing, right? "What are you asking me that for? I got this whole list of problems. I don't want to talk about that."

So I wanted her to be clear on what my question was. I asked her again, "Why did you marry John?" And so she looked at me and she went through a list and there were five or six reasons why she had married John.

By the time she got to the third one, her whole countenance had changed. There was no more tears. There was no more anger. There was a smile on her face. And by the time she got to six, there were tears again but they were tears of joy and happiness.

And I looked at her and I said, "Now, those are the reasons why you picked him. All the rest of the stuff is just the day-to-day stuff that we need to get through, okay? So go back to those core reasons, because those are your core values, and have a conversation with him about that."

My wife came to me and she said -- a little later she said, "Those two just lit out of here. Like, they didn't even say thanks for dinner or anything. They were gone and I thought we were going to play cards or something."

I said, "Honey, they have more important things to take care of when they get home."

Lee Rosen: Right. Fantastic story. Absolutely. So you have had a long and successful marriage, been married 30 years plus. Is this something you're doing? Have you been thinking about this stuff for 30 years and putting it to work in your life?

Dennis Yanke: I'll be completely honest with you. The answer is no. I think I've been blessed because I've always had a spouse -- Pat has always loved me probably far more than I've been able to love her. She just has this capacity within her.

But I am a real good student. And as I figured out how to repay that, what I discovered was things that she liked and she didn't like. And when I focused on what she liked and did them for her, I got some phenomenal responses from her. That's not why I did them; I did

them because I loved her and because I wanted to share with her in the way that she wanted to share.

And I would say in the last 10 or 12 years, kind of when we came out of our children are raised and what-are-we-going-to-do-next mode, I said to Pat, "I want to be that man you married again. I want to be the one you touch all the time and reach out to touch all the time."

Sugarland has this great song that's called "I Want to be the One you Reach for First." And I wanted to be that person with Pat.

Now, I think I always was, but I wanted to -- I made that statement to her "I want to reinforce that" and so that was kind of ground zero for me and then I've worked real hard the last 10 years in order to make that happen.

Lee Rosen:

Good. Now, you said -- we talked earlier in the program about sort of being this source of positivity. And that really resonated for me and I love the way that that sounds. And what I'm wondering is, when you switch to this way of thinking that you're talking about, when your spouse is leading you to this more positive place, is that - - how does that impact with other people? What are you seeing and how does it do that? How does that happen?

Dennis Yanke:

It would be very fair to say that people tell me things that they don't tell anybody else. So when I'm sitting in conversation with somebody, they say, "I can't believe I said that." So we get to a level of intimacy that -- in a very quick period of time -- that I don't think most people would ever get to.

And it's that level of them trusting me because they feel this positive energy coming from me and they feel this desire only to want to do good, that I'm not going to be critical of what they do. And that I don't waste any time. If all they're going to do is badmouth somebody, I don't waste any time with that; I quickly cut that off. And they get that this is going to be a positive experience. And I think that there's a lot of people that come and talk to me that I occasionally have to shut it down a little bit because it's just too consuming.

But that would be how my measure is, on a one-on-one basis, is what people say to me, how frequently I want to say it and how easy it is to get intimate with people. And then they say, "Holy smokes. I've never said that even to my spouse." Which of course I say, "Maybe you should be having this conversation with your spouse."

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Lee Rosen: Right. Well, terrific advice. I really appreciate you being with us today. And the ideas that you give -- you know, it's interesting because I do think -- I don't know if people get this listening to you, but I'm so thrilled to be in the studio with you because that positivity, it is contagious and it does -- you can feel it in the room. And so I hope that folks that are listening in can feel it in the same way that I get it one-on-one in the studio because it's magic and it works.

Thanks so much for being with us today. I appreciate it.

Dennis Yanke: Thanks, Lee.

Lee Rosen: You can find out a whole lot more about Dennis and his work by visiting his website. It's the title of the other -- the book that we talked about in the last show, LoveYourWifeGetBetterSex.com. Lots of information there about him and his book. You can even ask questions there. It's terrific.

Let me tell you this. We've got a couple of free copies of his book, the *Love Your Wife, Get Better Sex* book. And if you are interested in a copy, go ahead and shoot us an e-mail and we'll draw from the e-mails and shoot out a couple of free copies. You can e-mail us at comments@stayhappilymarried.com.

And if you'd like to leave a comment about the show -- this episode or any of them -- that's the e-mail address. We also have a listener comment line at (919) 256-3083. And we really appreciate your feedback, so let us know what you're thinking. And we always respond to those comments.

I'm Lee Rosen. Until next time, stay happily married.

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