

FamilyLife Today[®] Radio Transcript

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

Your Family Is a Mission Field

Guest: September McCarthy
From the series: Why Motherhood Matters (Day 2 of 2)
Air date: November 9, 2018

Bob: As a mom with a lot of kids, September McCarthy knows that, in the midst of the dailyness of life, it's easy to lose track of what's most important.

September: We get distracted in motherhood and parenting with errands, and sports, and what they need for this, and what they need for that, and all of the distractions that come along with raising kids.

This is where I say, "If you know your purpose, you won't get distracted," because it'll be laced into everything you do. When you do devotions, when they're washing dishes, when they have to get a job, when they're tying their shoes and complaining, when they have to go to bed—all of those things are laced with your primary purpose. Instead of "This is sports," "This is church,"—you know—"This is our faith, and it's going to be woven into everything we do."

Bob: This is *FamilyLife Today*. Our host is Dennis Rainey, and I'm Bob Lepine. The more we can remind ourselves of what really matters as parents—the more effective we can be at keeping the main thing the most important thing in our parenting. We'll talk more about that today. Stay with us.

And welcome to *FamilyLife Today*. Thanks for joining us. We're here this week to make sure that the moms, who are listening to us, understand that we understand that being a mom is a joy; but it's full of hard work and challenge—that every mom, who's listening, knows exactly what I'm talking about.

Dennis: Yes; and our guest on the program today reminds us, really, through her book, *Why Motherhood Matters*, that children are made to be received and then released.

Bob: Yes.

Dennis: Somebody has said: "A child is a mother's heart walking around outside her body."

It almost seems cruel of God to give a mom—and, for that matter, a dad—a child that is so close to them / to invest so much in them—to pull back the bowstring and let the arrow go. You've done it, Bob.

Bob: Yes.

Dennis: You've released five; we've released six; and our guest—I want to ask *her* how many she has released. September McCarthy joins us, again, on *FamilyLife Today*. I'm not going to tell the listeners how many children you have currently; I'm just going to ask how many releases you have so far.

September: We have released three into the world so far.

Bob: And when you talk about releasing—so, the first one that you released, where was that release point?—and what was that like for you?

September: Our oldest son, Ben, when he was 22, married. On his wedding day, he walked me down the aisle and sat me where I was supposed to sit.

He turned around and gave me a hug. I have to tell you—it was a joyful moment. I just remember thinking in that moment, “This is not what women told me was going to happen.” They told me I was going to be all sad and upset and, “Goodbye, son.”

I was just so confident in his walk, and I was just so thankful he was where he was—it was a joyful release for me. I remember thinking, “Lord, thank You for that moment,” because it gives me hope and encouragement.

Dennis: It feels right; doesn't it?

September: It felt so right; yes.

Bob: I've told people, for years, it was easier for me to release my kids in marriage than to drop them off at college.

September: Right.

Bob: The drop-off at college was—that's when—

Dennis: Oh yes, brother! [Laughter] You and I became—

Bob: —puddles. [Laughter]

Dennis: —puddles, wimps—[Laughter]—crying; yes.

September: Yes; yes. Well, when we took Ben to his first job at a Christian radio station, we set him up in his new apartment. I drove away, thinking, “This is hard.”

Bob: Yes.

September: So, dropping Ben off and leaving him at his first apartment at a Christian radio station, before he was married—that was our first release of him. I remember thinking: “This is hard. I don’t know what I’m supposed to be feeling right now—if I’m supposed to be worried, or trusting what we taught him, or what he knows and his faith in God is going to carry him,” but it’s that release—it has to be filled with trust.

Bob: Well, the first time we released a child, after we’d cried for 45 minutes—

September: Right.

Bob: —I said to MaryAnn, “What are you feeling?” and she said: “I’m feeling like this is right; and she’s going to be okay, and this is all really good.” And then she said, “What are you feeling?” and I said, “I’m thinking we’ve spent more time over the last 18 years than we’ll ever spend with her again for the rest of our lives.”

September: Right

Bob: And MaryAnn said: “Don’t think those things! Stop that!” [Laughter]

September: Right!

Bob: But for the next week, I would drive home; and I would see the car that Amy had driven in our driveway; and I’d go, “Oh, Amy’s home—no; she’s not home.”

September: Right.

Bob: It’s just that recalibration of life when you’ve let go of a child.

Dennis: What I was thinking, as we released our first one—as we drove away, and she was down on the corner, waving that little hand at us—both Barbara and I were sobbing as we drove away. I turned to Barbara and said: “That does it. I’m hiring a surrogate father to take the next five to college and make the release. [Laughter] There’s not enough of my heart to be *crushed* by this.”

September: Yes; it’s hard.

Dennis: You know, you said you’d made three releases. I want to correct you—you’ve made four.

September: Thank you; yes.

Dennis: You really have made four.

September: Right.

Dennis: The first may have been the most difficult; because you only had your daughter, Elizabeth, with you for one hour because she was born without kidneys.

September: Right; right.

And that's why, through this whole book, the theme, "Capture and Release" is a huge theme; because it's not just about watching them launch off—it's about releasing them to the Lord—letting them live out what you've taught them, and instilled in them, and shown them by example. That's the release for me, so it has become a huge theme.

Bob: We've already talked about the fact that, when you got married, you didn't have this: "I want to be a mommy—that's all I want to be. I just want to have kids. I can't wait to be a mommy." That was *not* what you were thinking or feeling. You wanted to be a teacher.

September: Right; yes.

Bob: And then God started giving you pregnancies, and then—

Dennis: Well, she is a teacher, Bob. She has her own school at home! [Laughter]

Bob: That's true; yes. Should we go ahead and reveal the fact—

Dennis: I think we should. Have her—

Bob: You've released three—actually four.

September: Yes.

Bob: How many do you still have to release?

September: We have seven left at home, and we have four left to homeschool.

Bob: So, your hands are still full.

September: They will be for a long time, I think; yes. [Laughter]

Bob: So, when did the motherhood bug hit you? When did you go: "This is what God's made me to be," and "I'm kind of excited about it"?

September: I think the biggest moment was when Benjamin, our firstborn, was close to one. I was starting to feel that itch that a lot of women feel to be doing something other than this—like: "I need to get out. I need to do something,"—like—"There's no place for me in the church anymore right now. I'm tied to this baby,"—all of those normal feelings.

I sat, feeling sorry for myself, with my baby. I looked across the road/the highway to this small home, where people came and went. They were a very busy family, but I could tell that they didn't know the Lord by some of their behavior and their actions. Of course, I had never asked them. I thought: "There is my mission field. There is my purpose."

That is when I realized that I could be exactly what I wanted to be for the Lord and in my life—but with my children—which is really a whole chapter we wrote about serving together, as a family.

That day, I just packed up Benjamin; and we walked across with some cookies and bread to the neighbors' house. I learned that motherhood had a bigger purpose than just about me. It was about teaching my children to open their eyes to the world around them. It taught me that I don't have to feel confined, but I can serve the Lord and I can be who God wants me to be. I could be an author; I could be a teacher—I could be whatever God *wanted* me to be—I just needed to walk out that calling with my kids.

Dennis: You don't see it as limitation, then.

September: No; I don't. I think that, whatever God has called you to do, you could do with your children. God has enabled you—He's given those gifts to you.

Bob: There are a lot of moms who sit, like you were sitting, with a one-year-old, and they go, "Yes; but here's the thing—the external validation that you get in the workforce, or just being with *grownups* for a few hours every day..." I mean, if you are at home with a newborn/a one-year-old, day in and day out, that gets pretty—I mean, I can understand why you get stir-crazy in the middle of all of that.

September: Right; right. A lot of women go back to work, and I champion them: "Do what you need to do for your family." You know, this book isn't written for just stay-at-home moms. This is to call women up in their purpose for motherhood.

I say, in my book, that "Motherhood may disappoint you if you're unsure of purpose." It's like with anything in life—if we don't *know* our purpose, then we're going to be disappointed: "So this is motherhood?" I challenge women: "What is your purpose in motherhood?" "If you can do that and work,"—"If you can do that and minister,"—"If you can do that and stay home,"—"then do that."

Bob: So, when did you resolve for yourself, "This is the purpose that God's given me"?

September: That resolve came after we had our first three children, and we found out we were expecting twins. Partway through that pregnancy, I started experiencing some serious health complications. The doctor said: "September, we need to get you to week 25 with this pregnancy,"—and, you know—"If you do, then we'll deliver the babies early

into the NICU.” I said, “Okay.” You know, you give a woman a goal; and that’s it—it’s right on her horizon: “Week 25,” / “Week 25.”

That week was getting closer and closer, and I was just getting more anxious and fearful. Week 24 came. I woke up in the middle of the night, and I knew that our boys had gone to be with Jesus.

Dennis: Oh, really!

September: I rolled over and I woke up my husband Dan. I said—you know, I told him. We just held one another, and we cried. We buried our boys with our daughter, Elizabeth. On the way home from the cemetery that day, we had three kids in the back seat. My oldest son, Ben, who is a typical firstborn—you know, passionate, and outgoing and just says whatever he’s thinking, and a strong leader—he said, “Mom”—he was five; he said, “Mom, will I be with my brothers when I get to heaven?”

I said, “Well, Ben, you know, you need to know Jesus as your Savior.” We talked about that in the car. I really didn’t want to talk about this at the time, you know; I was coming home from the cemetery. That day, my son, Ben, accepted the Lord as his Savior. I remember thinking, in that moment, “If I had not taken the first five years of his life and poured into him—taught him God’s Word, prayed over him, gone through hard times—given him salvation: what it meant, even though he hadn’t made that decision yet—that could have been a lost moment.” That’s when I knew that motherhood mattered.

Dennis: So, there would be those, who would be listening to your story, and they would say—as I’m counting it up now: two miscarriages, the loss of Elizabeth, and now twins: “How have you maintained a faith that God is trustworthy and that He’s a loving God, a compassionate God, full of grace and mercy?”

September: God is the only reason that I can give a reason for my hope. Nothing—nothing can compare to His love and mercy. I discovered that by walking through these times.

There are a lot of choices people can make when they go through things like this—or even heavier things—but the one thing I know is that He is my anchor; He keeps me grounded. When I try to stray away to dealing with things alone—whether it’s pain or loss—and not talking to people, or shutting myself out, or becoming anxious—*never* do I have victory in those areas.

I didn’t figure it out when I had my first miscarriage, and I didn’t figure it out when I had Elizabeth. But God is like that—He is patient. You know, He allows us to walk through these things and draw closer and closer to Him. One of my favorite hymns is *Nearer, Still Nearer*, because I realized, in this journey of life: “You know, I can choose to turn my head away from the pain and just get through and stifle it,” or I can say:

“Lord, I need You. I cannot do any of this without You,”—especially motherhood, because that’s a *daily* surrender: “Not my agenda. What do You want me to do with these kids?” “What do You want me to do in this moment?” “What is Your answer for this?” If we don’t have God—His Word / His hope—we really don’t have anything.

Dennis: As you were talking, I was just thinking, “You had to have hope.”

September: Right.

Dennis: To go negative about God is, ultimately, to lose your hope and not have an object of your faith that is worthy of trusting. To turn against Him is a big mistake; and yet, I understand why people do.

September: I do. I do understand, because emotion and loss are *real*.

Bob: You talk about your main purpose: “Raising kids who love the Lord,”—and I think the moms, listening, would go, “Well, isn’t that every mom’s purpose?” Is there a differentiator, as a mom comes to you and says, “I’m not sure what my purpose is”? Is there a one-size-fits-all: “Your purpose is to raise kids who love the Lord,” or does she need to figure out her own purpose before the Lord?

September: The Lord has given us children to steward; and He’s also given us children to raise to love Him, so that they can go out into the world. We always say that our ceiling is their floor; so that is what we tell our kids: “You know, this is—here you go. This is what we have to offer you—you know, we’ve given you the Word; we’ve given you these principles; we’ve taught you character. What you’re going to do with it is *your* choice—your relationship with the Lord.”

I think we have that choice, as parents. You know, we get distracted in motherhood and parenting with errands, and sports, and what they need for this, and what they need for that, and all of the distractions that come along with raising kids.

This is where I say: “If you know your purpose, you won’t get distracted; because it will be laced into everything you do. When you do devotions, when they’re washing dishes, when they have to get a job, when they’re tying their shoes and complaining, when they have to go to bed—all of those things are laced with your primary purpose.” Instead of: “This is sports,” “This is church,”—you know—“This is our faith, and it’s going to be woven into everything we do.”

Bob: So, with ten kids, did you do soccer, and gymnastics, and music lessons, and all of that stuff? How did you handle that?

Dennis: And what software program did you use? [Laughter]

September: You know, we let our kids—we told our kids: “You know, we have a big family. You need to choose when it comes to sports. You can pick one or two sports a year.” We have a lot of boundaries that I had to keep for myself.

At one point in my motherhood, I didn’t keep the boundaries; and I pushed myself pretty far—ended up in the hospital. I talk about that in my book. I learned a lot from that, so I learned to pick and choose. That’s why I share a lot of these things in my book—so that women don’t have to go through the *same* mistakes, because they’re an easy pitfall.

But one thing we did do with our kids is—you know, when they’re little, you can kind of see their bent and their gifts if you’re looking—you know: “What is this child strong in?” “Do they enjoy music?” “Do they like art?” “Oh, they’re very athletic; but do they like it?” If you really get to know the heart of your child, and you’re having a conversation with the Lord—like, “Lord, just show me,”—those are the areas that we spent our most financial/time investment instead of just trying to *fill* their schedule.

Bob: Yes.

September: So, like with Benjamin, it was very obvious, from a young age—at four, he was playing special music in church—you know, piano.

Bob: Wow!

September: So we started piano lessons and voice lessons. He did some sports, you know, just to keep him active; but we *knew* this was the calling Ben had on his life.

Now, he’s a worship leader—he and his wife both. It’s just really neat to stay in tune with your kids. You don’t know, all the time; but it does pick our investment.

Dennis: Two questions to end with here: “Are you done?” [Laughter]

September: Well, you know, our youngest is seven—

Dennis: I know that!

September: —and we haven’t had any more. So I guess we’re done!

Dennis: So, here’s the question, then: “When the youngest was placed in your arms, what did you think?”

September: I was 41; and I thought: “What a miracle. This is the *best* experience out of all of them.”

Dennis: Oh, really?

September: It was the hardest, and then reality set in. I thought, “I’m going to be walking with a cane when she gets married.” [Laughter] No; but it’s been a little different parenting journey. We’ve had three sets of kids—we had our three oldest, and then we had our three middle, and then our four youngest. I’ve evolved as a mom.

I think, when I wrote this book, I realized, “I can talk from every season of motherhood when I write this,”—and I’m a grandma. It really helped me to come from a perspective—trying to be supermom to, now, just embracing this motherhood.

I really enjoyed my motherhood with her. It’s been more physically taxing—

Dennis: Are you spoiling the youngest kids?

September: No; because, you know, the oldest kids don’t allow. They keep me on my toes. [Laughter]

Bob: Oh, they didn’t in our family—they just accused us of spoiling her.

September: Yes; I mean, they do!

Dennis: Yes; exactly! And you wait—when you’re done, they will draw you into court and they will—

Bob: —present the evidence.

Dennis: They will present the evidence—I promise you!

September: Yes; it’s happening.

Dennis: “You have spoiled this last one! You didn’t give us *near* the breaks!”

Bob: “We *never* got to do what...”

Dennis: “No; we *never* got a chance to do that!”

September: Yes.

Dennis: Well, you’ve done a great job today—

September: Thanks.

Dennis: —putting your arm around a mom and maybe some moms, who are—they are through the child-*bearing* and *rearing* years, but they’re now looking with a smile on the fruit and their reward, through grandkids. I just want moms to know: “You really are valued. You really are loved.” I was just thinking the other day, “I really *miss* my mom.” I

only had one of them—only one. She made some *great* investments in my life, and—
“Yes; Mom, if you’re listening, ‘Thanks!’”

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, which is heard in 47 countries and in 4 languages. 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.

We have resources in our resource center that may be helpful to you. On topics such as growing in your faith, forgiveness, finances, honoring your parents and lately we’ve been talking about parenting through 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 with any of your questions or concerns.

In fact, keep that email address handy global@familylife.com. We’d love to hear from you. You are part of the FamilyLife family and we want to know how God is using FamilyLife Today in your life. Please email us today. And let us know what country you live in, we might have a FamilyLife ministry there and would love to connect you.

Thanks for listening. Thanks to our producer Larry Loraine, our mastering engineer Dennis Leake, global broadcast manager Rhonda Street, and our entire broadcast team for the work they put in behind the scenes. We hope you’ve enjoyed the broadcast and that you’ll be back for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

FamilyLife, 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