



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** What Women Should Know About Men – Part 3

**Guest(s):** Shaunti Feldhahn

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**Dr. James Dobson:** Hello everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, a radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and thank you for joining us for this program.

**Roger Marsh:** Well welcome back to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, wishing you a happy Friday. Can you believe it? The month of January is almost over. A lot of us take time at the start of the year to set goals for ourselves, and maybe even in relationships as well. And here we are in the 26th of January and a lot of people have veered off track for moving towards some of those goals.

But if you're married, especially if you're married, I hope you are encouraged by the conversation that we've heard over the past couple of days here on Family Talk designed to strengthen your marriage. Take time to set some new goals with your spouse and incorporate some fun plans as well for this new year also. Now, as we've been listening over these past couple of days, author and researcher Shaunti Feldhahn has been discussing with our own Dr., James Dobson the dynamics of relationships between men and women. Shaunti is a well-known social researcher, an author, a public speaker, and a graduate of Harvard University. Today we'll be listening to the final part of her conversation with Dr. Dobson, and Shaunti's going to share some surprising thoughts that men think and might not always share with their wives. So turn up the dial, I think you're going to find this very, very interesting. Okay, let's go now to the conclusion of this insightful discussion featuring Shaunti Feldhahn and Dr. James Dobson right here, right now, on Family Talk.

**Dr. James Dobson:** Well Shaunti, we spent the first program talking about a man's need to be respected, probably above all else. The second program we talked about the role of sex and how that also is very closely linked to the issue of respect. Now I want to go into the other three or four topics that are in this book that are just outstanding. And one of them, surprisingly, is the burden that men feel to provide for their families. Now, I don't know what the figures are now, maybe 50, 60, maybe even more, a higher percentage of women are working today. And yet, the burden is still on the man, and he feels it. Explain that.

Shaunti Feldhahn: This is one thing that was fascinating to me as I started listening to guys, is that we all know, I mean, we women really do know that men want to be the provider. What we don't realize is it's not just a matter of wanting to, that it's this burden and this impulsion that goes so deep into his heart that even if we, as the wife, made more than enough money to support the family's lifestyle, it would make no difference at all to the feeling of compulsion that he has to provide. And as I was talking with different couples about this, I heard the same refrain a couple of different times where the husband would say this and the wife would turn to her husband and say, "Well, but I've always worked. I've always tried to help provide for the family." And the guy would say, "That's irrelevant. Not irrelevant to the family budget. I mean, it does help, but it's irrelevant to my feeling that it is my job to provide." And when women don't get that, we can inadvertently be really unsupportive and unrecognizing how big of an issue that is for him.

Dr. James Dobson: To imply that she could make it without him, that his profession is not that important, that especially he has not been very successful in what he's doing. That rips into the soul of a man, doesn't it?

Shaunti Feldhahn: Well one of the things that I found over and over was that guys kept referring to this as part of their identity. It wasn't just that this was something they did, this was part of who they were. And you can really see how, when you understand this, you can really see how a man who is having struggles in that area, it can go into serious depression. And the interesting thing, really, that most of us women don't realize is that that feeling of being on the edge and this compulsion, and I'm not really sure I'm doing a good job, that feeling is even with men who are very successful. They really do truly feel that they're just a few mistakes away from being fired, and then how am I going to provide for my family?

Dr. James Dobson: And that's for someone who is successful, but there is the other end of the continuum where a man gets laid off. I mean, that's a major psychological event in his life. It's not just finding another job. This, again, rips into his self-respect. Or, a man who is disabled and can't provide for his family. My heart goes out to that man.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Even one of the things I heard from several retired men was how difficult it was for them to find an identity really because they're no longer that whatever it was that they were and they're no longer providing in the same way for their family and it's suddenly, they're no longer who they were. And we women, we have responsibility to not add to that burden and instead be that support and be the constant cheerleader and recognize, as one guy said, "I feel like I go out every day into the ring and I fight the good fight and it's really lonely, and I need my wife there in my corner with my water and my back massage saying, 'you go, honey, you're my hero.'" We women sometimes greet our husband at the door with the, "Why did you work so late again, honey? Don't you care about me and the kids? Don't you love me?"

Dr. James Dobson: Oh boy.

Shaunti Feldhahn: And the guy is thinking, I'm working this hard because I love you.

Dr. James Dobson: And she doesn't accept that.

Shaunti Feldhahn: And she doesn't get it.

Dr. James Dobson: She'd rather have him than to have him bring home more money. And yet, his identity is wrapped up in being able to be the provider.

Shaunti Feldhahn: And there is a balance. I mean, there really is, obviously, a balance. But you know what? I think for a long time we've been unbalanced in the wrong direction, if not appreciating what a burden and a compulsion it is. And also, frankly, for many men, it's a delight too in a weird sort of way. They feel powerful when they provide. This is something they can do for us. So we just need to appreciate that. And it is true. There is a balance and we do have to be careful. I mean, Jeff and I, we started our married life in Manhattan. And Jeff is an attorney by training and was working these insanely long hours at a New York sweatshop law firm. And I made this mistake far too often where I would just say, "Why don't you just tell him no? No, you're not going to work on Saturday. No."

And Jeff is thinking, we have \$135,000 in student loan debt. We live in an doorman building. And he thought, he tells me later, once we sort of realized how we were communicating on this, he tells me later that what really he thought I was saying was that I was choosing the doorman building over his happiness, because he would've loved to have had a chance to not work that much. And that's one thing I think many of us women we really do need to wrestle with a little bit, is that we need to give our husbands permission to say, "Well honey, the only option is if you want more of me, maybe we need to downsize our lifestyle a little bit." And for us women to be willing to recognize that may be what it means, but I think most of us would be more than willing to make that choice.

Dr. James Dobson: But that's where you get the collision between the man's perspective and the woman's perspective, because the man's identity is wrapped up in that job and it's very easy for him to just get lost in it and to not be meeting the needs of the family of his wife or the kids. And the woman is at home saying, "Well, there's something else more important to me." But the way she handles that is the key. She cannot afford to show a lack of appreciation for what he's doing

Shaunti Feldhahn: Well and what I found really with a lot of the men that I talked to is that they really were more willing to sort of say, "Okay, maybe I do need to change my mind about the fact that maybe she's telling the truth when she says we can pull our kids out of private school. Maybe she really feels that way. And allow me to take a different job." But it's hard for a man if he sees his wife being sort of hard

and unwilling to listen and not willing to appreciate that, it's hard for him to believe that she really means it, apparently. And ladies, this is really where we have a responsibility, again, to be welcoming and affirming and gentle about this because it's really in our best interest to do so, honestly.

Dr. James Dobson: You have identified this biblical role of the provision for the family. I believe that came from the hand of God. There's another one. In fact, there are two more. The second one is protection. Provision and protection. It is his job to protect the family. And I take that very, very seriously. If there were any threat to Shirley or our kids, I mean, they'd have to go through me to get to them.

Shaunti Feldhahn: And women love that. But it is that issue of we need to also appreciate that that exists and not try to belittle it or something.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. And the third one is the spiritual head. I really believe God gives that responsibility to a man and he frequently doesn't get it. This is one message that I've tried to give for many years. One of the most frustrating things to women is that their husbands will not assume spiritual leadership at home and in the family. But yet, those are the three things that I think comprise the masculine role from a biblical perspective. You agree with that?

Shaunti Feldhahn: I do. And here's the thing, honestly, and this won't be the case in every marriage, this won't be the case in every relationship, but I bet that there are a substantial number of men out there who would feel far more able to step in that role of spiritual leader if their wife was willing to follow.

Dr. James Dobson: There are men out there who will not provide that responsibility at all, and their wives sometimes think, well, I'm just going to sit and wait on him. And you can't wait him out sometimes. You have to step in there. Now that's controversial.

Shaunti Feldhahn: It is controversial.

Dr. James Dobson: But it's what I believe.

Shaunti Feldhahn: And it is hard. And this issue of the spiritual leadership there is, I think, an issue deep in the heart of some of us women that we really do want to be the ones in control. And it is hard for us to recognize that sometimes if we put our preconceived notions of what is right and what is wrong aside and say, "You know what? Maybe his way of doing it is fine," and that he would sort of step into himself if we would support that and go that direction rather than saying, "You're doing it wrong."

Dr. James Dobson: Well said. There's a balance there.

Shaunti Feldhahn: There is a balance. Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. I said we're going to deal with several subjects. Here's another one that's in your book, and this came as a surprise to you from your research, men really do want a romantic relationship.

Shaunti Feldhahn: They do. This is-

Dr. James Dobson: Women don't believe that.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Wonderful, I know. It's really funny because one of the things that I do, and I tell women, that the men in their lives want romance just as much as they do. And mostly I get these requests like, "Well, why don't he do something about it?" And the reason that men have this reputation of being sort of unromantic cludes, if you will, and really, here's the thing, it's two reasons. One is that guys tend to feel a little, as one guy put it, a little left-handed romantically. They just feel clumsy at it. And they don't like feeling clumsy. Again, it's that insecure thing. And as one guy said, "Look, I am willing to make myself a fool for you. I am willing to go out on a limb and do something that is uncomfortable for me. But if you tease me about not quite getting that candlelight dinner right, it'll be five years before I try that again."

Dr. James Dobson: Well you said in the book that sometimes the successes your husband has in the romantic arena make him reluctant to try to top that.

Shaunti Feldhahn: I was telling a story about my husband, actually. Yeah. I mean, and it is. It's that competition thing that guys have. I just got to do better each time. And Jeff gave me this tremendous Valentine's Day present one year. We were in New York and he made this whole big long hoopla about presenting this gift to me, which turned out to be private ice skating lessons with JoJo Starbuck at Rockefeller Center. This famous Olympian. I'd always wanted to learn to ice skate. This was this huge thing for me. And then for three years after that, I hardly ever really got a birthday present or Christmas present that was like a thought through. And he tells me, told me later that he was sure he had never be able to top the reaction he got from me on that Valentine's Day. So he just shut down. And he needed me to say, "No, it's fine." I mean, I think it's that whole idea of guy competition too, which is he just felt like he had to top it. It's that whole idea that he didn't want to feel like I was disappointed in him.

Dr. James Dobson: I think that's the key thing. He didn't want to fail you.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah. And this is something that's really encouraging for us women to recognize, when we talk about the fact that they really want romance as much as we do, is to just recognize that, you know what? They just approach it differently sometimes. Let me give you another example. If one reason that they aren't maybe as outwardly romantic as we are, and one of the reasons is they feel clumsy romantically, another reason is that for them romance just often looks different. They want to go out and play with their wives and do things together. And when we don't get it, we can miss some great opportunities. A guy who

says, "Hey honey, you want to go to Home Depot with me?" And the wife says, "Eh, no I got some vacuuming to do around the house." And you know what? She doesn't realize that he's proposing this, just the two of them going on a little adventure to Home Depot and she's saying she'd rather vacuum the house. It's like, "Hey, you want to have a candlelight dinner?" "No, I'd rather vacuum the house." It's important for us to recognize it and embrace the fun of that.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Shirley and I have experienced that one as well because, for me, being alone with Shirley in the house for a weekend, even if I'm working on other things and she's doing her thing, the fact that we're there is romantic for me. And I will say that has been a great romantic weekend, and she'll say, "We didn't do anything."

Shaunti Feldhahn: My husband says it's anything that the husband is doing alone with his wife. And here's something that a guy said that I just loved. He goes out and plays golf some Saturday mornings, and he said, "The other weekend I was out with a group of guys, with our four-some playing golf, and in front of us on the golf course there was a husband and a wife playing golf together." And he said, "All of us were jealous. We love the idea of going out and playing with our wives."

Dr. James Dobson: Shaunti, would you recommend that a woman watch the Super Bowl with her husband?

Shaunti Feldhahn: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: Even if she wasn't interested in football?

Shaunti Feldhahn: Absolutely. Again, it's one of these things that guys love it when their wives get engaged with things that they find interesting. I mean, think about it. How much do we love it if the guy will go to the ballet with us, or whatever, and just seem like he's kind of interested. I love it that Jeff will watch ice skating with me. It's probably something he wouldn't have necessarily chosen to do with his Sunday afternoon, but I can show him all the different things and tell him the stories of all the people, and I love it that he gets interested in that.

Dr. James Dobson: Would you go fishing with him?

Shaunti Feldhahn: I would.

Dr. James Dobson: Take a picnic basket, and I mean, you could make that romantic even if you don't like fishing.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Absolutely. You could even make a trip to Home Depot romantic.

Dr. James Dobson: Well we've got one more subject to talk about, and this one is delicate also, but it has to do with the fact that a man does care that his wife tries to take care of herself physically, and that's a source of tension between them.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Well, and it's not just a source of tension, it's hard, if not impossible, for the guy to ever explain this to his wife, which is I think why God gave me this book because I'm a girl. And you know what? I was told this by a very brave man who explained this to me when I had just had two kids, 20 pounds overweight, easily, and he said, "You know what? There's another subject I think women really need to understand, and it is how important it is to their husband that he sees her being willing to make the effort to take care of herself for him." And I kind of said, "You mean her weight?" He said, "Okay, that's part of it, but that's not really it."

And this man expanded on that and he said, "My wife is tiny, she's very petite, but if she doesn't make the effort to take care of herself, she doesn't exercise and she has no energy to go out and do things together, I feel like she's not willing to make the effort to do something that she should know is important to me. And then that lack of energy and lack of feeling good about herself affects me." And this was a really critical thing that is very hard for us women to hear, but I realized that if this was true, and I started hearing this when I asked, guys we're willing to be honest about it, I said, "You know what? It is just as important that we women maybe step out into maturity on this issue as on any of the others because it is so important."

Dr. James Dobson: You're aware, I'm sure, that there are women who have listened to these three programs and have really found them helpful and interesting, and you just stuck a knife in their heart.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Well, and let me tell you, and the reason I can do this is because I'm right there with them. And this is where, just being completely honest, it is so hard for us as a girl to hear because, maybe in the same way that providing is the core of a man's identity and it's something that they can feel so, that knife can get stuck in their heart so easily, this is where the knife gets us because our self-esteem is so tied up in that. But that's really what the guys were saying, is they recognized that we felt better about ourselves when we did make the effort to take care of ourselves for them.

And that's really what they wanted for us. And even though it is hard, and I'm not going to downplay it, it's hard work for many of us women, especially if you have kids, I mean, with a life it's just hard sometimes. But we expect the same kind of effort from our men in other ways. One guy said, "You know what? It is work for me to do that mental work of seeing the woman with the great figure and turning away or those images popping up in my head all the time and doing the work of tearing them down and tearing them down and tearing them down, that's exhausting. It takes effort. It is so much easier when I see my wife being willing to make a similar effort on her side."

Dr. James Dobson: Let me put words to what I think some women are thinking out there. If he really loved me, it wouldn't matter. If he loved me for who I am... I'm not a sex

object. I'm not just somebody for him to admire physically. This is me inside here. Why won't he love me for who I really am?

Shaunti Feldhahn: And here's the answer to that, but the main answer is, he does love you for who you are. He does love you, and it doesn't make a bit of difference to the fact that this still matters to him. And so we can either deal with that reality or choose to sort of stay blind to it. And really, we're causing our husband some degree or another of pain. And how much better for us to sort of be willing to deal with the truth?

Dr. James Dobson: Well Shaunti, we've come down to the end of the third program. I have so enjoyed these conversations, and I know our listeners have too. And the name of the book again is *For Women Only: What You Need to Know About The Inner Lives of Men*. And it is a very, very practical book that I recommend highly. Now, we've got time for one last question to you, which is the last question, or the most important question, you asked of the men that you surveyed. Going back, and we need to tell everybody that this book is based on the findings from surveys of over 1,000 men, approximately half of them being churchgoers. All right, here was the last question and maybe the most important. It was an open-ended question. What is the one thing that you wish your wife knew but can't tell her? What did you hear?

Shaunti Feldhahn: The top answer, by far, double the next nearest answer when guys could say anything, the one most important thing they wish their wife knew but feel they can't explain to her is how much I love her. And that just broke my heart. It touched me so much because there is this enormous feeling out there amongst men that they feel handicapped at really getting across to the woman in their life how much they adore and care and love her. And I've had guys, I'll do a talk to a mixed group, inevitably, almost always I'll have a guy come up to me and say, with tears in his eyes, "That's exactly right. And it's not even that I can't tell her, it's that I can't seem to get it across in a way that she'll believe me." And that is, what a wonderful encouragement for us women to know that that's how our husbands feel about us.

Dr. James Dobson: Boy, that is a great place to end this three-Day program. Shaunti, thank you for writing this book and for the wonderful advice that you offer here, and thanks for being with us for three days now.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: God bless you, friend.

Roger Marsh: Well, what an insightful three-part conversation with Shaunti Feldhahn concluding here today on Family Talk. I pray that God has spoken to you through this meaningful conversation. And remember, all three parts of this discussion are available online for you to listen to when you go to [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). Once you're there, you will also find a link to Shaunti Feldhahn's very,



very popular book called *For Women Only*, and you can also search for other encouraging resources for your marriage on our website at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). That's [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). In this busy, fast-paced world, we can sometimes get caught up in wanting things right away, and this may even slip into our faith. We want God to respond to our prayers in our own timing. But in the words of the psalmist in Psalm 27: 14, "Wait for the Lord. Be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord."

When we go through difficult times as believers, it can be challenging to have patience, especially for circumstances that were unexpected, or we just didn't see them coming. The truth is that the Christian life can be extremely difficult at times, and if you're questioning God, wondering about the firmness of your faith and why God allows tragic circumstances to enter our lives, I encourage you to sign up for our special free 10 day email series from the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. It's based on Dr. Dobson's best-selling book called *When God Doesn't Make Sense*. Now, when you sign up to receive this email series, you'll receive messages that explore the depths of hardship and examine its purpose in our lives. As you spend a few minutes every day reading through the wisdom of Dr. Dobson, you will find your own faith strengthened and you'll learn why dark valleys can bring life's greatest blessing.

Obviously, the most important goal is a closer walk with the Lord. Now, you can sign up and start receiving these email messages even today. Go to [drjamesdobson.org/when-god-doesnt-make-sense](http://drjamesdobson.org/when-god-doesnt-make-sense). Again, that's [drjamesdobson.org/when-god-doesnt-make-sense](http://drjamesdobson.org/when-god-doesnt-make-sense). And remember, doesn't does not need an apostrophe. Also, if you're interested in picking up a copy of the book, *When God Doesn't Make Sense*, you can visit us online at [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). Well, I'm Roger Marsh thanking you for joining us today for another edition of The Family Talk broadcast. I pray that you have a peaceful and refreshing weekend, and may God continue to richly bless you and your family.

Announcer:

This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.