



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Building Hedges Around Your Marriage – Part 1

Guest(s): Jerry Jenkins

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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 to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. Well, it's the beginning of February and you've probably noticed those heart-shaped boxes of chocolates at the grocery store or perhaps the heart theme decorations at your favorite coffee shop have given you a clue of what time of year it is. That's right, Valentine's Day will soon be here and for many, love is definitely in the air. Now for married couples, this is a great season to rekindle that spark of love that brought the two of you together at the beginning of your relationship. Sadly though, millions of marriages today are being destroyed by infidelity and divorce, including many of those inside the church.

Now, oftentimes the collapse of a relationship begins with an innocent interaction between members of the opposite sex who are not married to each other, they're married to somebody else. The combinations of those friendships and unhappiness within one's own marriage can bring about disaster in any family. Couples must learn to stick together and fight for each other even when the going gets tough. In his book, *Love for a Lifetime*, Dr. Dobson wrote, "All that's needed to grow the most vigorous weeds is a small crack in your sidewalk. If you're going to beat the odds and maintain an intimate long-term marriage, you must take that task seriously."

Well, in today's classic conversation here on Family Talk, Dr. Dobson sits down with author Jerry B. Jenkins to discuss the importance of protecting your marriage. Jerry is an accomplished author, having written over 200 books with more than 73 million copies sold. 21 of his works appeared on the New York Times Bestseller list with seven debuting at number one. Jerry Jenkins' most notable books include the *Left Behind* series, which he co-authored with Dr. Tim LaHaye. Jerry Jenkins previously served as the vice president of publishing and board chairman for the Moody Bible Institute. Jerry and his wife Diana have three grown sons and several grandchildren. Now, in just a moment, Jerry will explain what the various temptations are that men and women struggle with. And because of the content being discussed, this program is not intended for

young listeners, so parental discretion is definitely advised. Now, let's join Dr. James Dobson and author Jerry B. Jenkins on this edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: What do you mean by hedges? Remind us of the basic theme of hedges.

Jerry Jenkins: Well, it really started when my younger brother was about to get married and he asked me, he said, "When I get married, will I stop looking at other women?" And of course, those of us who are married knows that that isn't the case. You don't stop. Your view doesn't change and your mindset doesn't change, but you've made a vow and you're exclusive now, and you have to keep yourself unto her for as long as you both shall live.

Dr. James Dobson: Even if you're a Christian man, you are likely to be wired that way.

Jerry Jenkins: That's the point and I told my brother, I said, "You're not going to be wearing blinders, but you're going to have to plant hedges to protect yourself, protect your hands, protect your heart, protect your eyes, protect the reputation of your spouse, of yourself, of your Lord, your church." And so I was talking to him about that, I was editor of Moody Magazine at the time and I wrote a monthly column and I thought one month I'll just put in my column what I told my brother about planting hedges. And as I wrote it, I thought, this is a little personal and it's a little bit revealing because if you tell people what your hedges are, you also tell them what your weaknesses are.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Jerry Jenkins: I mean, there are certain hedges I don't need to plant. I mean, some people do. I don't need to plant a hedge about staying away from ladies of the evening. That's just not something that appeals to me. I can't think of anything more repulsive, but there are men who are tempted that way, so they need a hedge there. For me, it's the dining alone with a woman or being flirtatious and that type of thing. And so I told what my hedges were and I got more response to that column than anything I'd ever written. And that's when I knew that it was a real need and that we needed a book on the subject.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you have reason to understand that subject from your childhood, don't you?

Jerry Jenkins: I do. I have a pretty sad story from my childhood. Beloved pastor of ours when I was a kid, we just thought the sun rose and set on him. And of course, he represented God to us as pastors do to little kids. You think your pastor's perfect and he preaches and teaches and he's wonderful to everybody and revered. And I was about 12 years old when his marriage was broken by adultery and split the church and he had to leave and took up with another woman. And I mean, it's been more than 40 years and it's still painful, still a painful thing.

Dr. James Dobson: It's one of the saddest phenomenon in human experience because it ripples not only through the marriage and usually destroys it, but through family members and through friends and through a church and a neighborhood. It has a certain power to it that other kinds of sin, which God also hates, doesn't have quite the same consequences that this one does.

Jerry Jenkins: It really does permeate. One of the things that I've learned is that adultery causes chaos. So many times you hear people say, "Well, we're going to get divorced because we've fallen out of love and the kids are going to be okay because they're resilient. Kids get over it." You talk to any adult who was a child of divorce and they'll tell you they still wish their parents could get back together. I mean, it's a sad thing and it affects their entire life, especially in the area of trust. Never trusting anybody anymore. I mean, imagine me revering my pastor so much as a young person. If my pastor could fall, who couldn't fall?

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Well, let's talk about some of those circumstances where you need a hedge and offer some advice to people because like you say, it varies from person to person. But let's put it in a business sense. Where should the hedges be for a man who goes off to work?

Jerry Jenkins: What I find is that it's important for me to not meet with or travel with or dine with alone with a woman who's not related to me. I'm not saying that if I did, there'd be all manner of inappropriate activity. Part of this is for appearances as well. You take care of how it looks. You take care of how it is. If I don't want it to look bad for me or for the woman or for my spouse to hear that I was alone with somebody or somebody to suspect something, I'm also taking care of what could happen. Because if you're not alone, so many men think that it's fine. Their secretary, they take them out to lunch every day or they let them take them to the airport or whatever. There are just certain little intimacies that crop up. You get friendlier, you get more close to each other and it might take a long time.

You don't intend to commit adultery, you don't intend to have an affair or anything like that, but it grows over the time. And then if you have trouble at home, all of a sudden you think of who's the person that smiles at you and thinks you're the greatest and talks to you and knows about you so much and it's the person you've spent alone time with. I mean, there are times when you're going to have conversations, even if you're not dining or traveling or meeting with them alone. Just in and out of the office, you talk about personal things. It's so easy to make your spouse the butt of a joke or the point of a complaint, you know, "If she'd only do this or didn't do that." It's not fair. And to me, a lot of this book is really-

Dr. James Dobson: She's not there to defend herself.

Jerry Jenkins: Exactly. And a lot of it is the golden rule. If you just think about, is this what I want my spouse to be doing when I'm not around or saying when I'm not around? That'll change your activity immediately.

Dr. James Dobson: You mentioned a minute ago about having dinner together, for example, which is an intimate activity. Eating together does draw you together. It's why we do it. Most dates involve taking your spouse out to eat or before you're married, it's the same thing. But even if you are totally innocent in it and you have no designs and nothing's going on inside of you, you don't know what's happening in the other person. You don't know what you're doing to the woman that you're with.

Jerry Jenkins: That's a major issue. Another hedge of mine is that I'm careful about touching. We do a lot of embracing today, and I think a lot of it is healthy, more so than when I was a kid. You hardly ever saw people, even in church, embracing each other. There were handshakes and maybe squeeze the shoulder.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, my dad didn't hug me a lot. He told me he loved me, but didn't hug me. Men didn't hug men in those days.

Jerry Jenkins: That's right. And nowadays, everybody's hugging everybody and hugging everybody else's wife and everything. And for me, that's a hedge that I plant. If a woman is not related to me, if I hug somebody, it's only in front of other people. And I keep in mind the thing you just talked about. You don't know what's going on in her mind. Maybe she has a bad marriage. Maybe you're simply embracing somebody to show them the love of Christ and they're starved for touch and you don't want to cause problems for them either. So there are all kinds of reasons to avoid things like that.

Dr. James Dobson: What do you say Jerry, to the people who say to you, "Well, you talk about an overreaction. We live in this culture. You'd have me coward of the women I'm around, the women in the office. I don't want to act like I'm scared of them." What's your answer to that?

Jerry Jenkins: I get a lot of that. In fact, from a lot of old women friends that say, "I don't know what to do. Shake your hand or look the other way or what." And I don't overreact, although, especially this one about not meeting or dining or traveling, when I go to speak, when you're a public person, somebody says, "Well, we're going to have so-and-so pick you up at the airport." If they tell me it's a woman, I tell them, "I have a policy that if a woman picks me up, have somebody come with her or send a man." And there's sometimes a long silence on the other end of the phone and it's like, "What's your problem? It's a 10-minute ride to the hotel and they're not going to jump you." And I have to say over the years, it can be embarrassing and you feel defensive and you have to explain yourself. But when I see all the marriages breaking up over things like this, I'll trade that embarrassment for my 34 years of marriage any day.

Dr. James Dobson: There is so much wisdom there. And I mentioned earlier that the scripture addresses this issue of adultery, not only specifically as Jesus did in Matthew 5:27-28, but in the stories in the Old Testament. When you just look at David, for example, and here was a guy with who knows how many concubines. He had wives all over the place and then concubines. He could have every beautiful

woman in the whole country in Israel, and he wanted Bathsheba when he was married to somebody else.

Jerry Jenkins: He wanted the one he couldn't have.

Dr. James Dobson: One that was out of reach, but not out of sight.

Jerry Jenkins: And people often talk about, I've seen people go to seminars and pray and have small groups about trying to find the will of God. Everybody's searching for the will of God for their life. To me, when there's a verse that begins, "This is the will of God concerning you," that's a clue. I

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Tune in.

Jerry Jenkins: Yeah, and there's a verse that says, "This is the will of God for you that you abstain from sexual immorality." I don't know how you can be more clear. Some people say, "Where do you find it in the Bible that you can't do this or that?" That's the verse. And if you don't know what sexual immorality is, you're reading the wrong book I guess. But it's quite clear what God wants for us and He has our best interest in mind.

I'm talking mostly to men of all ages, but I find that at least half my male comes from women who are reading this over their husband's shoulders or reading it and wanting to give it to them. And what they say in there in their letters is that they are learning more about males and how they think, and it's really been helpful for them. And yes, women in hedges too. I'm careful not to try to write for women especially in this area because they do think differently and they act differently. And my father told me, "You will begin to understand women when you realize that you'll never understand women." I enjoy that part of marriage too. I don't want to understand everything. I find my wife fascinating and new and fresh every day, and that's wonderful. But I think a woman needs to write on this subject as well.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you find that people in the church, people who consider themselves to be very committed Christians are more blasé about this behavior than in times past?

Jerry Jenkins: I find people on both ends of the spectrum now. There's hardly anybody in the middle anymore, but a lot of people think, yeah, you're overreacting and we're grown adults and it's a new day and we can be friendlier and more intimate and that type of thing. But it's a sad day too because I think people are finding that if you don't plant these hedges, you can have trouble.

Dr. James Dobson: Jerry, I understand why you didn't want to address that in this book, but it's just as needed in my opinion, because women don't tend to lust physically as much as men, but they lust emotionally. And a woman will enter into a romantic kind of relationship with a guy that's just as compelling and just as dangerous. In fact,

I can't quote the statistics, but I believe I can document the fact that more women divorce men than men divorce women. And oftentimes it is because of an emotional lust. It is shared affection and it is very seductive, just as the physical aspects a man sees a woman. Jesus addressed men as you did, Jerry, in this book in Matthew 5:28, "He that looketh on the body of a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her in his heart already." Why did he make that exclusive to men? Because men are the ones that look upon the body of a woman, that look upon the opposite sex. But a woman can get in trouble in her own way and somebody does need to write that book, I think.

Jerry Jenkins: And the saddest part about that whole issue is that so often when men fall and commit adultery, when they repent and want to come back and plead for forgiveness and reconciliation, they often say, "This other person didn't mean anything to me. It was just a sexual encounter." And I don't think that justifies anything. I think scripture's clear and you're really in trouble when you do that, but men can understand that, that they can have that kind of relationship and it probably didn't mean anything to them. That's the worst part about it. They did something so intimate and something that broke their most trusted relationship and it didn't even mean anything to them.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. And that is not true of women.

Jerry Jenkins: Right. And it's not what the woman wants to hear either.

Dr. James Dobson: You talk in this book about the little foxes of marriage. What are they?

Jerry Jenkins: Well, it's a similar analogy to big doors turn on small hinges. One of the little foxes are things like being flirtatious or being suggestive. I like to be funny and there's nothing funnier or easier in humor than a double entendre, but I just have decided that that's not a place to go. I remember again in my childhood, I knew a couple of couples at our church that would socialize together, and they did this for years, and it was just known that the husband of one of the couples and the wife of the other would tease each other flirtatiously in front of the other, their spouses. And it was just funny. Everybody thought it was funny. But then one of the couples went through a little rocky period and the woman said to the guy, just asked him if he was ever serious about his little comments.

Well, he liked the sound of that, and they got more flirtatious, broke up both marriages, got married, and of course that marriage didn't last. Now, we got three marriages broken and you talk about chaos, kids on every side, and it all started with what people thought was innocent flirting. Flirting is fun and flirting gives you a sexual rush. And my motto is, I'll flirt with my wife and you flirt with yours. And as I say, my hedges won't necessarily be someone else's hedges. Somebody might need 20 hedges, somebody might need two. I think I had six or seven the first time. I probably got eight or nine now with all the new things that are coming. But among the positives I tell people, "One great hedge for your marriage is to tell your love story."

For one thing, it's always two stories because men and women come at it differently. But remember when you were putting your best foot forward, when you were trying to be the best you could be, what was it that excited you about your spouse when you first met and what made you want to marry them? Tell how you took it to the next level and how you first declared yourself. Children, for one thing, love these stories. It gives them a great sense of security to know that even before they were born, mom and dad had a real love relationship and were excited about each other. Plus, it just reminds you to be that way all the time. Try to court your wife as long as you're married.

Dr. James Dobson: Will the following be examples of little foxes? Inappropriate touches being ever so innocent. Your assistant hands you a paper and you slide your hand across her hand as you take the paper. No big deal. You could explain it. You haven't done anything immoral or wrong, yet it is a little fox. Winks, lingering looks. You mentioned lunches and dinners. Those are dangerous times because there is an atmosphere of intimacy there. Even though you haven't done anything wrong, you could explain it to your spouse, but you know you've crossed a line or you're moving in that direction.

Jerry Jenkins: Even how you compliment a person. I mean, we like to say nice things to people, but to tell someone that a certain article of clothing looks nice or that they look nice today is one thing, but to say, "You look great." Just how the inflection is.

Dr. James Dobson: So you'd make a distinction there. You wouldn't mind saying to somebody, "I really like this. Is that dress new?"

Jerry Jenkins: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: That would not for you be an inappropriate comment?

Jerry Jenkins: Right. I might talk about how color looks or how something looks on somebody, but I'm careful about not making it too personal. And when I first came up with that one, I thought, I may be really drawing two final lines here, but when women read the book, they often talk about that very thing, they said they can tell the difference in just an inflection or just a word. Same way as with an embrace.

Dr. James Dobson: And that reminds me of a time when we went out to dinner with a Christian leader and I didn't see anything unusual about his behavior. And we got home that night and Shirley said, "That man is hungry." I said, "What do you mean?" She says, "I don't know how to explain it, but he is very vulnerable. I could tell by the way he related to me." There wasn't anything overt or I would've picked it up, but she knew it. Indeed, that man got into an affair with somebody else not long after that. Women are very, very sensitive to that. You have to be very careful what you are conveying to the opposite sex when you might not mean

anything significant, but she's listening and watching and she's wired that way. Right?

Jerry Jenkins: Really makes you believe in women's intuition.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, absolutely.

Jerry Jenkins: And we men can really be ignorant about these things. I really do count on my wife's intuition, especially about men. Somebody that might be impressive to me or persuasive to me, she is a little suspicious of and for various reasons in it. And whether it's something she picks up in their look or just their body language or how they speak, it could be anything, but I think it's a worthy thing for man to listen to his wife. Same way as with an embrace. If somebody embraces them, it might just be a half a second or a second too long. Now you don't have to use a stopwatch and that type of thing, but men know, you know whether you're embracing somebody for their benefit or yours, and you need to think about that.

Dr. James Dobson: And that's what Jesus was talking about.

Jerry Jenkins: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: When you have crossed that line in your mind, if you never get around at doing it, you've committed adultery. I find some theologians and pastors take that to mean to even have noticed the attraction is sin. I don't believe it. I believe lust occurs when it's wedded to the will, when the intent or the determination to do wrong.

Jerry Jenkins: I agree with you on that because I do think we're wired that way. I mean, if you don't notice, you got to be blind. Some people use that as justification, "Well, God created that, so I'm going to stare at it and worship it." That's going too far, but we're made to be attracted to the female form, and that's when you need to decide where you're going to plant your hedge.

Dr. James Dobson: If you don't have that reaction, you're a man in a great deal of trouble.

Jerry Jenkins: That's a whole different program.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. But that's very different than a willingness to sin.

Jerry Jenkins: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: Jerry, there's so much more in this book and we're going to devote another program to it. So why don't we meet again here next time and thank you for being our guest today.

Jerry Jenkins: Thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: And thank you for writing this book. It'll save marriages.

Roger Marsh: Well, what an insightful conversation featuring Dr. James Dobson and author Jerry B. Jenkins today here on Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and I pray that the discussion you just heard has motivated you to want to more actively defend your marriage with a deeper understanding about male and female characteristics. Now, if you missed any part of today's program or you just want to listen to it again, be sure to visit us online at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. While you're there, you can also learn more about Jerry Jenkins ministry and his many popular books. You can also explore all of our marriage and family material resources as well. Again, our website is drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And be sure to join us again tomorrow for part two of this powerful conversation featuring author Jerry B. Jenkins as we continue our discussion on building hedges around your marriage.

It's often been said that the husband and wife who pray together stay together, and if you and your spouse would like a closer relationship with God and each other, you'll want to try our 10-Day Marriage Series. Prayer is very powerful and it really can change all kinds of situations. So to take the 10-Day Marriage Series challenge, all you have to do is visit drjamesdobson.org/10daymarriageseries. Then simply input your email address and click on the signup button. It's that easy. From the day you sign up for the next 10 days, you'll receive an encouraging email from Dr. James Dobson about how to strengthen your marriage. The email will include some words of wisdom from Dr. Dobson and some questions for you and your spouse to answer, as well as a prayer that you can say together. All marriages require intention, dedication, and hard work to realize the gifts God intended for marriage. Sprinkle in some love, trust, and grace, and well, you have a pretty nice recipe. So sign up today for the 10-Day Marriage Series when you go to drjamesdobson.org/10daymarriageseries.

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

Roger Marsh: Hey, everyone. Roger Marsh here. When you think about your family and where they will be when you're no longer living, are you worried? Are you confident? Are you hopeful? What kind of legacy are you leaving for your children and their children? Here at Family Talk, we're committed to helping you understand the

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