



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Love Like You Mean It – Part 2

Guest(s): Bob Lepine

Air Date: February 15, 2024

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Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener-supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome back to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. Most people believe that marriage is supposed to be a fifty-fifty proposition, right? Well, guess what? Those people are wrong. That's a performance-based marriage where a husband and wife are literally keeping score, if you will. We're going to hear more about that from today's guest, Bob Lepine in just a moment. Bob is the author of the book titled *Love Like You Mean It*. And he will be explaining that married couples should seek to serve one another. So instead of asking, did you pull your weight today? Couples should be inspired by Jesus Christ himself and be prepared to give 100% each and every day to their spouses and their marriages. By the way, marriages that follow that principle are far more successful than those where a husband and wife only give a 50/50 effort. Now let's listen to the second half of Dr. Dobson's conversation with Bob Lepine on this classic edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Bob, I thoroughly enjoyed our conversation yesterday when you were my guest. We talked about your book *Love Like You Mean It*. Let's begin by talking about that title. Are you suggesting that many couples come into marriage without a full understanding of what love means? Is that what you were reaching for there?

Bob Lepine: Well, that was my experience. I was in love with the idea of marriage. I was in love with the benefits of marriage. I think Dr. Dobson, I was in love with the idea of being loved. So I was happy to marry Mary Ann as long as she would make me feel the way I was feeling right now and make me feel that way forever. So I had a very self-focused idea of love, but the Bible gives us a completely different perspective and *Love Like You Mean It* is really a call to let's love the way God calls us to love. Let's love authentically and genuinely and let's love one another biblically.

Dr. James Dobson: Did Mary Ann have a more mature understanding of love?

Bob Lepine: I think she was a little bit further ahead. I think she had a little more of a sacrificial heart than her boneheaded husband did at the time.

Dr. James Dobson: How long did you go with her?

Bob Lepine: We started dating when I was 19 and we got married when I was 23. So we had like you and Shirley, about a four-year courtship before we got married.

Dr. James Dobson: And it looks like it's going to work, doesn't it?

Bob Lepine: So far. So far we're hanging in there and like you, we talked about this earlier, but like you the marriage has grown sweeter and deeper and we've been married for 41 years. In these years together, we just find that the relationship is richer than ever and I think that's the experience for so many couples who continue to persevere, to stay together, to work through the difficulties. There's a reward, there's a payoff on the other side of that.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, let's summarize where we were last time. You have written this book *Love Like You Mean It*, and inside you have drawn information and understanding about love and about marriage from 1 Corinthians 13 where the apostle Paul really describes what it really does mean to fall in love with somebody. It's certainly a whole lot more than romantic in nature, and it comes from an understanding of God's perspective on love. We were getting to the question of humility. That word is not used in 1 Corinthians, but you infer it from what Paul says. Pick up right there and explain.

Bob Lepine: Yeah, the Bible says love does not envy or boast, it is not arrogant. And you stop and think about arrogance and boasting and envy. Well, the opposite of that, it's humility and humility is foundational to everything that this passage talks about. Philippians Chapter 2 says it's having the mind of Christ. It's not thinking only of your own interests but also of the interests of others.

Dr. James Dobson: Bob, I'd like you to elaborate on what humility really means because some people think that means you don't have self-respect. That's not what the scripture's talking about, is it?

Bob Lepine: No. And in fact, I think a lot of people get confused thinking that humility means I should think less of myself than I do. I think what the Bible's telling us is that humility means you should think of yourself less than you do. So it's not that you have a lower sense of self-worth, you need an accurate understanding of what the Bible says about our worth and our value. But we shouldn't be focused on ourselves. We should be thinking of others. In J.B. Phillips paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 13, he says, "Love does not cherish inflated ideas of its own importance." And I think that's a great way to explain-

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, that is good.

Bob Lepine: ... what humility is.

Dr. James Dobson: That is good. You've got a chapter that's kind of funny. It says, "Be a bulldog." You need to explain that. Have you ever owned a bulldog?

Bob Lepine: I've never owned a bulldog.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I've got to tell you, they are not loving. We had one that lived in our neighborhood that got Scotty by the neck and wouldn't let go until he nearly killed him. When I think of marriage, I don't think of bulldogs.

Bob Lepine: Well, this came from a quote, I actually heard our mutual friend, Howard Hendricks, who has gone to be with the Lord. He was speaking one time and he quoted Winston Churchill who had said that God made a bulldog with his nose slanted backwards so that he could keep breathing without letting go. I think about marriage and I think that's what we're supposed to do. We're supposed to keep breathing without letting go. You dig in, you hang on, you keep breathing and you don't let go. And that tenacity, love is tenacious. That's how the Bible points this out to us. We need to be tenacious in our love for one another, have the tenacity of a bulldog.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I don't know how to tell you this, Bob, but that's a stretch. A bulldog holds on while he's killing you is what he does. All right, let's go to the next one. Love is honest.

Bob Lepine: Yeah, and this is an area where I really feel like we need to pause and unpack this because the honesty that is required for love to flourish I think first of all is an honesty to say, "I'm going to know you and you're going to know me at the deepest level and we're going to be..." Well, it's what God said to Adam and Eve, to be naked and unashamed. I think the nakedness that the Bible talks about in Genesis 2 is not a physical nakedness, but I think it's to be emotionally transparent with one another. It's to be who we really are in front of one another and to have no shame and to have no condemnation for that.

So as a husband and wife, we have to learn how to love one another, how to love our imperfections, not love our sins, but love the person who is behind that sin and recognize that those imperfections, those sins, those weaknesses, there's a way to deal with those things. And so honesty is, can I be transparent? Can I be safe enough in this relationship that I can be who I really am without rejection from my spouse? That's what real love looks like.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, that one is absolutely critical that you cannot trust one another if you don't know that the other one is telling you the truth. And I felt that strongly when Shirley and I were first married, the truth meant a lot to me and Shirley had grown up in a home where there's an alcoholic father, and there were people that came to the door who wanted to be paid for this or that, and Shirley was taught to lie to that person because that's the kind of life they lived. It was

just a struggle. She learned that the truth can be manipulated a bit, and we'd been married several years and Shirley went into the kitchen and made me a tuna fish sandwich and she knows that I hate mayonnaise. I mean, I don't just dislike mayonnaise, I despise it and yet she felt like she had to put mayonnaise in this tuna fish in order to hold it together.

And so she put mayonnaise on my sandwich and I came in and the first thing I asked was, "Did you put mayonnaise in the tuna?" And she said, "Yes." I took a bite or two of it and realized that she did put mayonnaise in it. Now, that was no big deal. I mean, that's a tiny, tiny little issue. It's almost petty, but I made a big deal about it because I said, "Shirley, if we can't trust each other on everything, then our marriage doesn't have an opportunity to breathe and to grow and I just want you to understand that on big things and little things..." Now, some people would've thought, man, you overreacted, you made a big deal out of nothing. I didn't get mad about it, but it was that I was expressing the fact that we must build our relationship on total honesty and we've tried to do that since.

Bob Lepine:

Well, and I had a very similar experience. I was the bad guy in this story, Dr. Dobson. I had gone to the grocery store, Mary Ann had given me the list and I said, "I'll go get what you need." Mary Ann and I approach the grocery store very differently. It's a shopping adventure for me, and I want to see if there's anything new or if anything jumps out at me, I want to be in the moment. She has the list, she wants to make sure we get what's on the list. We don't need to look at anything else. We just go through and get the list and get out of there as quick as we can. So I was all prepped. I'm on my own at the store, I've got her list, I'm getting everything she's asked for and I walked by a bag of Cheetos. And that was not on the list, but I wanted those Cheetos and I thought, "Those would be good to have."

Now, I knew if I came home with a bag of Cheetos, Mary Ann was going to go, "What did you buy these Cheetos for? They're not healthy, we don't need them around the house. This is not good for us." But I decided I can buy Cheetos if I want to buy Cheetos. So I did. I bought the Cheetos, and then on the way home I was thinking, "I'm going to be in trouble with my wife for buying a bag of Cheetos." So I thought, "I'm just going to hide them in the garage, and she'll never know I bought them and when I want to have some Cheetos, I'll just run out there and get a little few Cheetos and wash my hands off. She'll never know that I have my hidden stash of Cheetos."

So I got home, I hid the Cheetos in the garage, I came in the back door. Mary Ann said, "Did you get everything at the store? Did they have everything?" I said, "Yeah, they had everything." She said, "Did you buy anything else?" And I said, "Oh, I bought some grapes." And I had bought some grapes that weren't on the list, but I knew grapes were safe so I said, "Yeah, I bought some grapes." She said, "Oh, okay." Now I had told the truth, but I hadn't told the whole truth because I left the Cheetos out of the equation.

Dr. James Dobson:

You can.

Bob Lepine: Well, here's what happened. This was just at the time when grocery stores were starting to print receipts that had itemized lists of what you bought on the receipt, and I didn't realize that. So when she picks up the receipt with the groceries, she goes, "Where are the Cheetos?" And all of a sudden I was busted with my illicit purchase. And it wasn't that the Cheetos mattered all that much. It was that I had intentionally not told her about them. I was hiding something because I was afraid of her disapproval, and this is where we had to have the conversation that to be able to be open and honest and transparent with one another. The Bible says love rejoices in the truth, and so we have to have this kind of truthful honesty in marriage for our love to flourish.

Dr. James Dobson: Love is really made up of a lot of little things, isn't it?

Bob Lepine: That's what this passage is all about, all of these characteristics of patience and kindness, not self-seeking, not keeping a record of wrongs, not being rude or arrogant, being honest, not rejoicing in unrighteousness, rejoicing in the truth, all of these little things, these are the ingredients that make love the kind of experience God calls it to be.

Dr. James Dobson: Who would've believed that out of the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians, we find references to mayonnaise and Cheetos. Let's go on to the next one. You said in another chapter love is unflappable. Now that word is not in there, but you got it out.

Bob Lepine: Yeah. And here's where I tried to say certain places in the Bible, love is described as not being these things. So the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 13 that love is not rude, that it's not irritable and that it's not resentful. And I was trying to think, "Okay, well if it's not those things, what is it?" And that's where the word unflappable came to mind. Somebody who is rude or irritable or resentful, that person is easily irritated and love is different than that. Love does not get irritated with little things. Love is not keeping a record of wrongs. Love is not rude to another person.

You stop and think about it, when we are rude or irritable or resentful in marriage, we're not building the kind of emotional stability or emotional warmth that is necessary for love to grow. In fact, nobody is drawn to another person who is being irritable or being rude. We're repelled from them. We're isolating ourselves from them. So for love to grow, we have to address what may be a natural tendency of ours to be rude or to get easily irritated or to be resentful, to keep a record of the wrongs that our spouses committed against us.

Dr. James Dobson: And yet we all tend to be rude and irritable at times. So that's part of marriage too, isn't it? I've never met a marriage that didn't have some of that in it, but it's what we do with it when it happens that matters.

Bob Lepine: And that's the other side of this. So when our spouse is being rude or irritable or resentful, when we are bearing that, we're back to being patient, which is where this passage starts, that love is patient. We have to pour grace on the little sins of our spouse. The Bible says it this way. It says, "Love overlooks a multitude of sins." And in the book of Proverbs, it says that it is a man's glory to overlook a transgression. So when your spouse is short with you or rude with you or irritable, you have to pull back and say, "Okay, what else is going on?" We bear that with patience. Maybe we address it later and say, "Earlier today I felt like you were irritated with me what was going on?" But we just bear this as an act of love for another person, and then we help one another become less rude, less irritable, less resentful, and work through this, replace those behaviors with kindness and compassion and gentleness and the godly qualities that should make up a loving relationship.

Dr. James Dobson: Remind me of somewhere in the scripture where I remember a reference to little foxes.

Bob Lepine: Yeah, that's in the Song of Solomon where the writer Solomon talks about the little foxes in the vineyard that rob the vineyard of the love. And you're exactly right, rudeness and irritability and resentment, those are the little foxes. They'll eat the grapes of love from a relationship and leave your vine empty and drain the love out of a relationship.

Dr. James Dobson: In fact, in your book, you referred to rudeness as a killer of love.

Bob Lepine: Mm-hmm. Yeah. Nobody in a marriage has ever found themselves being drawn or attracted to a rude spouse or a rude partner. When your wife or your husband is saying something that is rude, or maybe they're being sarcastic with you or they're being inconsiderate with their speech, nobody finds themselves saying, "Gee, I feel close to you right now. I feel drawn to you. I want to spend more time with you." And that's why I think rudeness and irritability and resentment are all working together to drain the love out of a marriage relationship, to kill the love in a marriage.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, in today's parlance, they would refer to it as a turn-off.

Bob Lepine: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's shift to another portion of the book where you talk about a 50/50 marriage. If I would walk up to somebody on the street and said, "Tell me what 50/50 marriage is referred to, is that a good thing to have a balance like that in marriage?" I think a high percentage of them would say, "Yeah, that's what we're seeking for." But you're very negative about that. Explain that negativity. Well,

Bob Lepine: The 50/50 marriage is a performance-based marriage. It's where we're always measuring one another's behavior or one another's love, where we're looking

not just at how can we serve one another, but did you pull your weight today? Did you do what I think you're supposed to do? I've heard it said for years that a person who's looking for a 50/50 marriage is often a poor judge of measurement. Or a person who says let's meet in the middle, is a poor judge of distance. We often say, well, let's meet in the middle, but you should really come a little more onto my side than me having to come onto your side.

Dr. James Dobson: It's a scorekeeping, isn't it? I did that for you, now you do that for me.

Bob Lepine: Yeah, I'll do the laundry if you will wash the car and I'll cut the grass if you'll take care of the meals. Well, we serve one another in a marriage, but we can't be serving with a scorecard in our hands. As you said, if we do that, we find ourselves not loving one another but competing with one another and saying, "I don't have to do my part today because you didn't do your part, and since you didn't do your part, no sugar in your coffee today."

Dr. James Dobson: Would you call the ideal 100/100 marriage?

Bob Lepine: Exactly. This is where we have the other person's interest at the forefront, and we say, "Whatever it costs me, I'm going to sacrifice for your good." And stop and think about Jesus. Jesus was not a fifty-fifty lover of us. He does not come to us and say, "Well, I will love you, but here's what you got to do in order to earn my love." Now, Jesus pours out love unconditionally, and that's the kind of love we should be pouring out to one another in our marriage and you know this Dr. Dobson, the only way we can pour that out in a marriage is if we first receive that kind of love from Jesus.

To be filled with his unconditional love for us, is how we can then manifest that unconditional love for others. If we try to do it in our own strength or with our own resources, we will fail. But if we receive God's love for us through Jesus, then we can pour that out to our spouse regardless of what's going on on their part. And you can't have a healthy, strong, loving relationship if either party is committed to... Well, we will give concrete examples. If a husband is committed to pornography, that kind of unrighteousness, you're not going to have a loving, godly marriage where that's present in the marriage relationship.

Dr. James Dobson: That's probably the most difficult question that I've asked you in these two days because it's very hard to imagine being as loving as the prescription in 1 Corinthians 13 when there is addictive behavior like pornography or a person is into infidelity or is involved in the gay lifestyle or is an alcoholic, there's a wife beater or a child abuser or is into gambling. Those are really, really difficult questions.

Bob Lepine: And when this kind of wrongdoing or unrighteousness is present in a marriage, the most loving thing we can do as a spouse is not just to bear it, but to confront it and to help our spouse, our husband, or our wife, get free from this controlling behavior. The Book of Galatians in Chapter Six, it says, If you see a

brother who is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual, restore the other person with a spirit of meekness or gentleness." You make it your goal to try to set your spouse free from the sin that is enslaving them and that is controlling them. And you may need the help of the church leadership, you may need the help of a counselor, you may need to call the police in situations, but you're doing it with the heart of love to try to stop your spouse from this wicked behavior that has come to control their lives.

Dr. James Dobson: What did you mean in the book when you talked about a marriage triangle?

Bob Lepine: This is a picture. You think about a triangle with a three equal sides, an equilateral triangle. The husband's on the right side at the bottom of the triangle, the wife on the left side at the bottom of the triangle, and they want to draw closer to one another. God is at the top of that triangle. So if the husband and wife are committed to pursuing a growing relationship with God, as they draw closer to Him, they are going to draw closer to one another because the triangle is what brings them together. As they work their way up toward Him, they come closer to one another in their pursuit of Him and I think that's where so many couples need to have their focus. Rather than trying to fix one another, how can we draw closer to God and let God's Holy Spirit do the work in us to clean us up from our sinful, unrighteous behavior?

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Well Bob, we're out of time. I've really enjoyed this exploration of love in your book *Love like You Mean It: The Heart of a Marriage that Honors God*. I recommend that our listeners get a copy of this. It's a wonderful treatise on love based on the love chapter of all times in 1 Corinthians 13. And you've drawn a lot of meaning out of it. I don't know what you're working on now, but when you get it done, you give me a call, will you?

Bob Lepine: I would love to do that. It's been an honor to be on with you today, and I just appreciate you so much, Dr. Dobson.

Roger Marsh: You know, visualizing your marriage as a triangle that includes God is quite a powerful image indeed. And that was the conclusion of our two-part conversation featuring our special guest, Bob Lepine, along with our own Dr. James Dobson here on Family Talk. Bob rightly explained that the Lord is asking us to be humble as we interact with our spouses. It takes courage, grace, and God to reach a deeper, more connected and loving new level of marriage, and every spouse must put in the work. By the way, if you'd like to hear this program again, simply visit drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And while you're there, remember that you can also learn more about Bob Lepine, his ministry and his book entitled *Love Like You Mean It*.

As a parent today, you bear an incredible weight of guiding your kids through a confused and turbulent culture. It seems everywhere you turn, there are ungodly agendas being foisted upon your kids at every age and stage of life. Well, to walk alongside and better equip you as a parent with timeless biblically based advice and tools, Dr. Dobson has bundled his books *Bringing Up Boys* and

Bringing Up Girls together, and we'll be happy to send you this bundle as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute today. So to place your order and make your request, click the link on the broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. Well, I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for making family talk a part of your day, and be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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