



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Navigating the Rapids of Life

**Guest(s):** Carolyn Koons

**Air Date:** August 11, 2023

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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:** Hi, this is Roger Marsh for the James Dobson Family Institute, a ministry that is completely supported by listeners just like you learn how you can stand with us financially in our fight for righteousness in the culture by going to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) or call toll-free, 877-732-6825. Thanks so much for your prayers and your continued financial support of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

**Dr. James Dobson:** Greetings everyone and welcome to Family Talk. I'm your host, Dr. James Dobson, and I'm very pleased to have you with us today because I think you're really going to enjoy the program. We have reached back a long way in our archives today and we are bringing back an early presentation by a good friend. Her name is Carolyn Koons and she is a retired faculty member from Azusa Pacific University and she was a great speaker at that time. I'm sure she still is. I love to hear Carolyn speak. So lean back today, listen, as Carolyn Koons speaks on the topic, Navigating the Rapids of Life. Try to figure out where she's going with that one.

**Carolyn Koons:** This river is called life and we're going down this river and this cotton-picking river is going five miles an hour. And we can't stop it, can we? Now, we do everything possible to try and slow it down, at least to get people to think we're not that far down the river. Backpedal, baby. Backpedal. But we're on a river. You know what the problem with whitewater rafting, it is so similar to life. Because in white water rafting, you put your raft in at a portion of the river that it's usually pretty calm. And there are times when you and I are in our adult time, it's like the calm part of the river. The river is running wide and we're in the current and there's no way we can get out of it. And we get into this raft and we're starting down the river. And there are calm times and then all of a sudden, there are times when the rapids are really raging in our life and things come crashing in on us and all of a sudden, unexpected things happen.

You know what the problem is? If we think and we have been taught that we are smooth sailing baby and this is this nice calm, placid river, then why in the world are there rapids and why in the river are there haystacks pounding in on

our raft? And why in the world are we in all these problems? And when we see somebody who is in all these problems, whether they are Christians or not, whether they're church members or not, sometimes we see people in the white rapids of the water and we judge them. And we think that their problem is they're not right with God.

And you know what? There are rapids in our life that you and I are in that whether we are Christians or whether we are not Christians, those rapids are built into life and you and I will face them. And just because we are Christian, doesn't mean that we are picked up off of this river of life and we skim over all of the rapids. No, it means that God gives us a raft that is firm in foundation and that God gives us guidance to get down that river.

Now, I'll never forget. I had a crazy, crazy whitewater raft experience. We went up out of the Tetons, out of Wyoming. Norm Wright, marriage and family counselor, you've probably read one of Norm's, I always say, 9,000 books. I think he's written about 60 or 70. Great marriage and family counselor, Norm and his wife and this other couple and another couple and another couple, and Carolyn. I'm always doing all these things with all these couples, but that's okay. Anyway, we decided to go whitewater rafting and fishing up out of Wyoming as a vacation. Now, none of them had been whitewater rafting. I'd been once. So I borrowed some people's rafts and we did something that I would not recommend that you do. But it's very interesting because this is kind of how we have approached life. You drive up to the river and here's the bridge, and it said this was the Snake River. And here's this bridge.

So we parked one of the cars there, we got the rafts and all of us people and the others, and we drove all the way. Oh, we drove about an hour or more up river and there's a sign that said Snake River. Now, logic says if we get in the river at this point and we go down not knowing how far it is or what's between here and there, well, if we got the car parked close enough to the bridge, we will know when to get out of the river. Do you know what? That's the way most people get into life. That's the way we've approached life. We know there's a life ahead of us. We know that down there somewhere we're going to die, hate to use that word. And we're in this river and most adults have no idea what is between this point and that point.

We drove up river and we pumped up those rafts and we got into the calm part of the water that was going about five miles an hour. Now, we were also enjoying a lot of good Christian fellowship and we kind of shared the food and the fishing and everything between the rafts. So we did another thing that we probably shouldn't have done. We tied ropes around the rafts to tie them together. And we start down that Snake River, and man, we're fishing and we're having a great time and we're sharing sandwiches and Cokes and we're going down that river. And it's so much like life, just going down that river. And all of a sudden, we begin to hear an audible rumble.

And I'm telling you, we should have got the cue when the professional rafts were tied up on this side of the river. And those rafts held about 10 to 15 people. Our raft held four each, and they were all sitting there in their rafts with cameras as we're coming through. Well, before we realized what can happen is our rafts are gently tied together. We hear this rumble, we see the cameras, and all of a sudden, you could just hear it coming and we got thrown into Hell's Pothole. And Hell's Pothole came up to us. And I'm telling you, all of a sudden the river was just shooting us as fast as it could and the current started dividing. Well, Norm's raft tried to go that way and our raft tried to go this way. And number one, we didn't know there was a Hell's Pothole there, but we also didn't know that a tree had fallen down right in the middle of Hell's Pothole.

We came around that thing, and I am never seen rapids like this. I mean, they were just beginning to bury us. We were holding on for dear life and here shoots this tree right at us. And I'm telling you, we all screamed and everyone from the side is yelling and Norm pulls out his hunting knife because this is like psycho movie, I'm telling you, baby. He's back here and I'm going, don't cut the rafts, I borrowed them. Norm comes down with this knife and I'm grabbing him and his hand and he goes down to cut the ropes and he cut our raft. He also cut the ropes. By now we are caught in this current, our raft goes shooting ahead and we go right into this tree. This is a jagged tree. We are pinned against this tree. And everyone's screaming. And I had this sensation I could drown, I couldn't breathe. I was at the bottom pinned against a tree.

Well, finally they kind of pull over the side of the tree and our raft is literally cut loose and we go shooting down this river except there's nothing to shoot in. We're holding onto this deflating raft. And fortunately right through Hell's Pothole, here's this bend in the river and we were able to swim to the side and we got a hold of the side of the river. And there we sat. And pretty soon this other professional raft, they go out and they pick up Norm and his wife and this other couple, and they pull their raft into theirs. They put theirs into the raft and they get in their raft. We're freezing to death. We're holding onto the side of the river. We hardly know what to do. We're waiting for Norm and those guys to come rescue us. And he's sitting on this raft and he's going down the river.

And you know what he said? Meet you at the car. I couldn't believe it. Do you know the emotions that went through me at that moment? My first reaction was, honestly, it was disbelief, that you know what I did? I started getting ticked. I got a little angry. My friend deserted us. Have you ever been holding onto the side of the river and see someone else go down that river and someone else is almost passing? And you know what, they're starting to dry off. Some of them look like they haven't even been in a river. And we're holding onto the side of the river and they're going by. And you know what? We go through all those emotions. We get angry, we get frustrated, we feel rejected. And you know what? I find thousands of people today holding onto the side of the river.

Roger Marsh:

You're listening to Family Talk and I'm Roger Marsh. Just jumping in here for a brief moment to remind you that if you're just joining us, we are enjoying a classic presentation from author and motivational speaker, Carolyn Koons. She's one of Dr. Dobson's favorite guest speakers. Carolyn is the executive director at Rancho el Refugio, an educational and training center for missions and ministry in Mexico. She's explaining how we can all navigate the turbulent rapids of life with the metaphor of rafting down a river. Let's rejoin her now right here on Family Talk.

Carolyn Koons:

I find thousands of people today holding onto the side of the river, thousands. Oh, there's all kinds of reasons why they're there. They're there, because, well, they didn't expect that they were even in a river and they don't know why they fell out of the raft and they don't know why they got so hurt and so bruised and so betrayed, but they're sitting by the side of the river. And I think the biggest tragedy in life is to watch someone who almost has given up just holding on the side of the river. And there will come times when you're holding onto the side of the river that someone may come over and give you encouragement and give you nourishment and give you help and stay there by the side of the river. But pretty soon, even they have to continue down the river, don't they?

But that's life. That's life. We're on this river and we have to go down it and we get into those white waters and we get into those Hell's Potholes. Well, I was really ticked when we saw Norm going down that river. Now I wish I could have some spiritual sensation of saying, well, we got back in the river, we patched our raft and we went down the river. Well, we couldn't because we didn't have any patches. And I don't know how to make a spiritual illustration on that, but we basically had to climb out of the river and we drug that slashed raft two miles through the woods to the nearest highway. Now, would you pick up four people that were sopping wet with a slash raft hitchhiking down a back highway? Well, finally a pickup truck picked us up and we got to the end.

You know what the reality is? This is the way we go through life. We got into a boat thinking it was a sailboat, and we knew that we'd get down there sooner or later, but never did we try and figure out Hell's Pothole. And life is made up of Hell's Potholes, isn't it? Well, to some of you, Hell's Potholes have been problems with your kids, financial problems, marital problems. I bet you there are some of you that feel that your whole life has been one Hell's Pothole.

All that garbage that happened back there, all that stuff that we kind of brought with us to the river, and we put it in the raft with us. Not only are we going down this river and we're in the middle of Hell's Pothole, but our raft is weighted very, very heavy, isn't it? Now, we're going down this cotton-picking river. Now, one of the deceptive points of the river is when all of a sudden Hell's Pothole and we're past the rapids and there does come a time when we get past the rapids, but beware, there's probably another set of rapids up there, right? Right.

But you're going down the river and it seems calm. And after you see the rapids, the water kind of widens out again. And there's usually time you can kind of paddle over the side and just kind of stay there for a while. And you know what? There's a time in our life when we do have to come over to the side and rest for a while. Sometimes Carolyn Koons almost needs to stop the world and stop the stuff to go over to the side to rest a bit. And then I finally get rejuvenated again and it's okay, and I'm a little dried off, and I'll get back in that raft and I'm going down that river. But this deceptive thing in the river, you're going down this smooth river and you see a little ripple, it just kind of folds over all the way down the river.

And on the top, it doesn't look like, it just looks like the water just folds in the middle, just a little fold. It's called a weir. And the problem with the weir, on top, it doesn't look too bad, but it's what's underneath that can really sink you. And all of a sudden, if you're going down one of those weirs, and we have taken canoes down there, and I thought, oh, I'll just cross that thing. And all of a sudden, that weir, that little fold, it catches the bottom. And this turmoil underneath, the deceptive top of the water, flips that canoe. And I'm telling you, it could just pull you under for a while. And I've had people say the weir is the scariest part of the river for them.

Hey, we can see the white waters. We can hear it. We know it's coming. We're in the middle of it, but it's the deceptive things in our life that flip us that we're, wait, how'd that happen? We're practically into it and we're sinking and we're grabbing for water before we even realize we got into it, right? Got to be aware of the weir, beware of the weir. The simple thing on the surface of life, the little relationship, the little dabble, the little habit, the little sin, the little compromise, the little, oh, I can try. I've always wanted to try this, but I'm kind of bored over here and I think I'll try this. And all of a sudden, that thing will go, suck us under and we wonder why we're drowning. And this is the way most people have gone through life because no one ever told us, did they? They never told us.

You know what? There is a correct way to do whitewater rafting. It's the same way we are told by God to go through our journey of life. Well here, if you want to go whitewater rafting, you don't park the car at the bottom and jump in an hour up here and hope that you'll get to the end and you hope your car's under that bridge. You want to go whitewater rafting, you know what you do, you go to the forest service. They have maps of the river and they have such detailed maps, they will tell you if you park your car here and if you start back here ... This map is so detailed, it will describe that river out for you and me, that river of life. And it tells you not only how long it will take you to get down there, but it will tell you all of the Hell's Potholes that you and I will face going down that river.

Not only will it tell you where the Hell's Potholes are, it will rank Hell's Pothole. It will put it on a scale of one to seven. And it will say that as you get higher up here, up to a seven, you got to be really careful. You got to be really skilled to

get through a seven. And not only will it rank it for you, it will tell you, listen to this, these maps will tell you how to get through Hell's Pothole without getting too wet. And you know what the map will often say, lean into the rock. Lean into the rock, because the water will rush up against the rock. And we're trying to go against the rock and the water will just go up against that rock and it'll just skim right down. And you'll shoot down that river. And the maps will also tell you to go right down the middle of it, lean against the rock and, baby, chug, chug. Just keep paddling.

Don't try and back paddle. Do you hear me? Don't try and back paddle. Don't try and go over here and just hold on and watch everyone else go through and say, man, I'm not going through. Just lean into the rock and start chugging. And you know what God wants? He wants people that are willing to just chug through that water but leaning onto Him. And when we go through Hell's Pothole, yes, you and I will get wet and some of us will actually get wetter than others. But you know what, leaning into the rock and just keep moving forward. There are many times in my life when I have gotten myself in some major problems in my life and I think I'm going to sink.

The first couple of years with Tony, I was convinced I was sinking, baby. I was sinking. And you know what, I kept saying to myself, I know there is an end to this rapid. I know we'll get through it. God, just take me one step at a time. God, just chug, just paddle. Just go through. Because you know what, you and I will come out of that rapid. There is white water at the end of every rapid. God has given us the map. There is never a time in our history that God has not given you and I, as Christians, more maps to the river. His word, Bible studies today, support groups in the churches and outside of the churches and Christian support groups that are dealing with those rapids in life, that alcoholism, that sexual abuse, that emotional dysfunctionality, that family I was raised in, my marital problems and on and on and on. You know what finally the church is doing? We are studying the river. We've got people out there, we've got Jim Dobsons, we've got Swindolls, we've got people that are out there giving us maps to the river.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I'm James Dobson again, and that was Carolyn Koons, who was our guest by recording today, going back a long ways, I think the mid-1980s. And I love that presentation, hope you did too. If you'd like to learn more about her ministry, go on over to today's broadcast page at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). There you'll find a link to her website and how you can order any of her popular books. That's [dramesdobson.org](http://dramesdobson.org). And then click on today's broadcast page. I want to tell you again that Carolyn Koons has been a friend of mine for well over 40 years. We seldom go back that far in our archives, but this one was worth hearing again.

And in fact, everything I have recorded by Carolyn is good. And when her number comes up again, you'll hear her once more. She's not only a gifted speaker and writer, but she loves the Lord. She loves children. She's made a great contribution to Azusa Pacific University where she was on the faculty for

more than 50 years. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and I hope you'll be sure to listen next time for another edition of Family Talk. Have a great weekend everyone.

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

Dr. James Dobson: Someone once said, if you remove the rocks from a brook, it would lose its song. Well, that holds true for you and me as well. Author Scott Walker tells of the time he was asked to help some friends dig through the ashes of their house after a fire. When they arrived, all that was standing was a portion of the outer brick wall. Where the piano once stood, lay only a pile of ashes in twisted wire. Nothing had survived the blaze. But while sifting through the debris, Walker came across a tiny China bluebird. He wiped away the soot to find that the colors were still bright. A few hairline cracks had formed in the glaze, but beyond that, it remained intact.

Walker writes, "As I gazed down at the bird, small beak in two black eyes, I wanted to weep. If only this little bluebird could talk, what a story it would tell. A story of the heat of the night, of terror, of survival against great odds. And then the crucial question hit me. Why did this China Bluebird survive? It had survived the fire because it had been tested by fire." And so it is with human beings who have been refined in life's raging furnace. They are tougher, harder, and more resilient than those who have never faced difficulty and loss. That understanding may help us cope the next time the heat is turned up on our tranquil little world.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hi, I'm Dr. Tim Clinton for the James Dobson Family Institute. Who inspires you on matters of faith, family, and culture? If you don't already get it, sign up for Dr. Dobson's monthly newsletter at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). Each month you're going to receive insight and news that impacts your family and solid advice that you can trust. Whether it's wisdom for parents, tips for building a lasting marriage, or discernment on issues your family may be facing, you're going to find direction, encouragement, and more every month. Visit [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) and sign up for that monthly newsletter today. And again, that's [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). You'll be glad you did.

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 legacy that you're leaving for your family. Join us today at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) for helpful insights, tips, and advice from Dr. James Dobson himself. And remember, your legacy matters.