



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Beloved Unbeliever – Part 2

**Guest(s):** Jo Berry

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Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello, everyone. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and you're listening to Family Talk. Now today's broadcast is the second installment of a two-part conversation that I had with the late author Jo Berry more than 40 years ago when I was with the organization I founded, Focus on the Family. We want to share this recording with you because the topic is still highly relevant. Jo and I were discussing her book, *Beloved Unbeliever: Loving Your Husband into the Faith*. This book is about marriages that are unequally yoked. That means where one spouse is a practicing Christian and the other is not. We spoke specifically that day to Christian wives with unbelieving husbands.

On yesterday's program, Jo and I talked about the specific challenges that are common among women who are married to non-Christian husbands. Jo offered some practical and encouraging advice that I'm sure listeners found helpful. If you missed the program yesterday, you can hear it by going to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). Jo was a regular in-studio guest with me during the 1980s. She wrote several books on topics related to Christian living and she was a popular seminar speaker. Unfortunately, for the rest of us, Jo passed away in 1988 from cancer.

She's rejoicing with Jesus now. Her Lord was the primary focus of her life here on Earth. Well, here now is part two of this conversation between Jo Berry and myself on the subject of her book *Beloved Unbeliever*.

Let's really get tough now, Jo. I am your husband. You're a Christian. I'm not, and I'm mad about it. I say, "Now, look, I've had enough of this Jesus stuff, especially with my kids. I don't want them distorted. I don't want them growing up with all that guilt hanging on them. I don't want to hear you mention His name in the family, and I don't want you praying with those kids. I don't want you taking them to church and I'm telling you don't do it." Now what?

Jo Berry: Well, that's like answering how do I solve a universal problem? Each situation is different. A lot of it depends on the personality of the wife involved, actually. But again, all I can tell you is what I would do and what other women have told me they have done in the same situation. That is, I'd say, "All right. When you are around, we will try not to talk about the Lord in front of you." As far as the church thing, some women have shared that they have gone as far as to send

their children to church and spend time with their husbands if that will help appease. I would probably, knowing my personality, go ahead and take the children to Sunday school at least quite frequently because I think, again, we have the charge in Acts that we must serve God rather than man. So if there is a choice to be made, even if that man is your husband, you have to obey God. We do have commandments as parents to raise our children in the Lord.

Dr. James Dobson: So I'm really glad to hear you say what you just said because I agree absolutely with it. There are Christian leaders who don't. There are Christian leaders who would identify the term submission as putting the obligation on the wife to wait for her husband to suddenly wake up spiritually. By the time he does that, the kids may be on their way to Hell.

Jo Berry: He may never do that. You see-

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, that's right.

Jo Berry: ... you can't assume that he's ever going to become-

Dr. James Dobson: That right.

Jo Berry: ... a Christian.

Dr. James Dobson: That's right.

Jo Berry: These wives can't live. They can live with that hope, but they cannot live with that as a fact day to day.

Dr. James Dobson: In the absence of that, somebody has got to teach those kids.

Jo Berry: That's absolutely right.

Dr. James Dobson: I feel so strongly that they should not antagonize him. They should not throw Christ in his face.

Jo Berry: No.

Dr. James Dobson: They shouldn't be pious. They shouldn't flaunt their prayer and all the rest of it. But somebody has to take those kids to church, and somebody has got to pray with them and teach them and train them and guide them. If the father isn't going to do it, the mother has to do it, and I feel very-

Jo Berry: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: ... strongly about that issue.

Jo Berry: I know of one instance where a man had taken the stance that you just hypothetically put to me. One night he was listening, his little three-year-old, a three-year-old, was praying a very precious prayer about, "Bless my daddy, and let him know how much we love him and let him know how much Jesus loves him. Please make him to be a Christian so that we can all be a happy family." This man was so touched that he started weeping, and he started going to church and listening. I think it was probably a two-year period before he actually committed to Christ, but that child was a turning point, and that's scriptural too, isn't it? The little children-

Dr. James Dobson: It sure is. It sure is.

Jo Berry: I know of instances where these little children-

Dr. James Dobson: Shall lead.

Jo Berry: ... little ones who have been nurtured by Christian mothers in an unbelieving situation.

Dr. James Dobson: You make a point in your book about the difference between passivity and submission.

Jo Berry: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Describe that for me.

Jo Berry: Well, passivity is just as you stated before, just saying, "Well, this is the way it is and I'm going to accept it. I just have to live with it and I'll do anything to keep the peace," and so on and so forth. Submission is actually choice. You choose to put yourself under something. The whole idea of submission for a woman to her husband is that she sees herself as under his authority in a general way. But when that conflicts with her submission to God and we're also told to submit to God, then the submission first has to be to God and not to the husband.

Dr. James Dobson: Jo, if we're talking to a half-million women at this moment who are Christians and their husbands aren't, we must be talking to 2 million women or five or six times as many whose husbands are Christians but won't assume spiritual leadership.

Jo Berry: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Boy, I hear that-

Jo Berry: Yes, it's very common.

Dr. James Dobson: I hear that all the time. How can a woman set an atmosphere in the home that will make a man want to assume that spiritual leadership, call a family to prayer,

read the Bible with the family, get them to church on Sunday and be a model for the kids in the family?

Jo Berry: Well, this is like going through Robin's back door, but the most important thing that any wife needs to know is her own role as a Christian wife. There's a lot in Scripture, and you have the Proverbs 31 woman who is really a fantastic lady. You have the concept of being a helpmeet, which involves more than doing dishes, cleaning house and taking care of children. It involves the idea of being a kind of helper to your husband that God is to His people. It involves the idea of counseling and sharing ideas and opinions and thoughts. We touched before on the idea of communication, and the only area where this communication shouldn't take place, where total communication shouldn't take place is in trying to talk your husband to Christ. But in all other areas, communication has to be open and honest just as in any marriage.

Dr. James Dobson: Even there, it can be open and honest-

Jo Berry: Oh, yes.

Dr. James Dobson: ... but you just don't nag him to death.

Jo Berry: Nag him, you just don't nag him to death. You aren't always quoting Scripture. He comes home and takes a beer and you don't say, "Do not be drunk with wine, whereas in excess." There are women who are prone to do that and God knows that, and so he's laid down that stipulation. You just can't nag your husband to Christ, neither can you be responsible if your husband is a Christian for his spiritual condition. Again, that takes humility, and that seems to be one of the things that's hardest for all of us to come by as Christians, isn't it?

Dr. James Dobson: Jo, in a day of women's liberation and changing self-concept of women and so on, what does the Bible mean by a helpmeet relationship? What is a helpmeet, and does a woman have to subvert all her own desires for creativity and productivity in order to fit into her husband's plans and be a, quote, "helpmeet?"

Jo Berry: No, I don't think that's what that means at all. I can't come up with chapter and verse, but in Proverbs it says, "As iron sharpens iron, so man sharpens man," and I think that's definitely a good description of the basis of the helpmeet relationship. It really means that she is a helper who meets the needs of her companion. It's almost a compensation type thing where he's strong, she might have some weaknesses. Where he's weak, she has some strengths, and they compensate each other. It's a honing type process. First of all, it involves companionship, being a companion and a friend to your husband.

It involves the idea of counseling, of literally helping advise your husband of saying, "I don't really agree with that," or, "Yes, I think that's a good idea," and talking those kinds of things through. As you see if you study women in

Scripture and what they did and study Proverbs 31, you definitely see that a woman who is a helpmate is an addendum to her husband. The Proverbs 31 woman was such a great source of pleasure and joy and so industrious and competent at what she did that her husband sat around with all the elders and bragged about her. He was sitting there in the gates talking about what a great wife she was.

Dr. James Dobson: The children rose up and called her blessed.

Jo Berry: Called her blessed, and she didn't get that way by sitting around and complaining and worrying about whether she was being terribly submissive. She got that way by being actively involved in her husband's and her children's lives and contributing to them.

Dr. James Dobson: I like that, and it's related to a Scripture you've referred to indirectly two or three times, 1 Peter 3:1-4. Let me read this and ask-

Jo Berry: All right.

Dr. James Dobson: ... you to comment on certain words that are in it.

Jo Berry: All right.

Dr. James Dobson: It says, "You wives be submissive to your own husbands, so that even if any of them are disobedient to the Word, they may be one without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observed your chaste and respectful behavior. And let not your adornment be external, only braiding the hair and wearing gold jewelry, putting on dresses, but let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God." All right, three separate things I want you to refer to here or react to. One you've already mentioned, and that's the word submissive. How does Peter use that word? You wives be submissive to your own husbands.

Jo Berry: When you understand that in God's structure, He is in authority over you; an authority, not in a bossy sense, but in authority like Christ is your Lord. It's a protective thing. You're the helpmate. He's in the authority position. It means that he is the head of his family, and that's true whether he is a believer or an unbeliever. God has ordained that position for him as husband, and it means then to respect that position. You can disagree with certain stands that he takes in that and work that through, but you recognize his position in your life just as you recognize Christ's position in your life.

Dr. James Dobson: Even if he's an unbeliever.

Jo Berry: Even if he's an unbeliever. It doesn't qualify it in Scripture that it's only Christian husbands.

Dr. James Dobson: Even if he's a beloved unbeliever.

Jo Berry: That's right, a beloved unbeliever.

Dr. James Dobson: Okay. How about the word respectful, as they observed your chaste and respectful behavior?

Jo Berry: All right, chaste has to do with the idea of being pure and being faithful to your husband. A lot of unbelieving husbands have legitimate complaints, and some of them told me that they know their wives say things about them sometimes even in prayer groups, "Would you please pray for Harry? He has been on a tirade lately about my going to Sunday school," and so on and so forth. This is being unfaithful with words. It's painting portraits of your husband that are very unbecoming to other people, and part of being faithful to him is to be faithful to his image as a husband.

Dr. James Dobson: You gave an example of Diane in your book. Describe that for me here.

Jo Berry: Diane was a lady who once she came to Christ, got a bad case of what she called later spiritual superiority. She was a Christian and her husband wasn't. So she wasn't respecting him, she was actually being disrespectful to him just because he wasn't a Christian. She said that one day she went to his office and she was just taken back because she saw how everyone in his office treated him with such high esteem. He was a relatively young man and his secretary would say, "May I get you this?" Or, "May I do this?"

She was actually just really open to serving him and other people in the office were showing, "Yes, sir," and, "No, sir." She said she was so convicted because she realized that she had been treating him so shabbily and when she saw what a nice person he is and how much respect other people gave him, she realized that she had been falling down in that particular part of her ministry to her husband. She had not been being respectful to him, and the only reason she was not respecting him is because she was a Christian and he wasn't.

Dr. James Dobson: If I can add to that from a psychological point of view, we are told in Ephesians for husbands to love their wives and for wives to respect their husbands-

Jo Berry: Respected their husbands.

Dr. James Dobson: ... and men need to be respected.

Jo Berry: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Even more than they need to be love-

Jo Berry: Esteemed.

Dr. James Dobson: ... they need to be respected.

Jo Berry: That is really true.

Dr. James Dobson: You want to destroy a marriage, start attacking the man's ego-

Jo Berry: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Start undermining him. Start treating him like you think he's really dumb. He's really not worthy of leadership in the family. First of all, he'll start acting that way-

Jo Berry: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: ... 'cause you act the way you're seen, and secondly, he'll start resenting it

Jo Berry: You can see how this is easy to do in a situation where the woman does have all the quote, "spiritual knowledge," and the husband has none.

Dr. James Dobson: Yes, and she knows more about how he's supposed to act from a Christian point of view than he does.

Jo Berry: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: All right, the third phrase has to do with the gentle and quiet spirit to be silent. What do you say to a woman whose temperament is not gentle and quiet?

Jo Berry: Flamboyant, I think, is the term that my husband has applied to me, but the idea of gentle and quiet spirit doesn't have so much to do with personality traits. Thank heaven. Thank you, Lord. It has to do with a settled calmness inside that God is alive and well and operational in your life and in the life of your unbelieving husband and in the life of your marriage. So you don't have to rail about situations that happen, "If you were a Christian, this wouldn't have happened," or, "You shouldn't be doing this," or so on and so forth. You can sit with a gentle, quiet peace inside of you. The peace of God knowing that God is going to work this situation through if you do what He's called you to do.

Dr. James Dobson: Jo, you have a quote in your book that deals with this. You said, "While this imposition of silence is difficult, St. Gregory wisely observed, quote, 'It is needful that we sometimes endure keeping to ourselves what evil men are in order that they may learn in us by our good living what they are not.'" That is the perfect description of the responsibility of the unequally yoked wife.

Jo Berry: Perfect description, yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Jo, let's talk about the really tough situations now, where it's not just a difference of opinion about spiritual matters, but where the husband is beating

the wife, we'll say, how do you counsel the women who come to you with regard to wife beating, we'll say?

Jo Berry: Get out. A long time ago, I decided that one of the ways I was going to work out my theology is that everything that I was going to believe and that I was going to teach and I was going to pass on to others and incorporate into my life, I was going to try to base on the character of God. When I say get out, I'm doing that based on what I believe God wants for people as individuals and He sees us as individuals. He doesn't look down and say, "Oh, there's a lump of Christians."

He really sees us as individuals, and so this isn't something that I've lightly taken. I believe that God would never expect a woman who is in a marriage to live in a situation where she had to be consistently physically abused, where her life was in danger, where her children are in danger. You know the terrible residual effects of children who live in abusive situations. Most men who abuse their wives have been abused as children themselves or have seen their mothers abused, so there's a pattern there. We see this with alcoholics and so on and so forth.

Dr. James Dobson: Are you talking about separation or divorce?

Jo Berry: I'm talking about basically to start with separation, I would never ever counsel any Christian woman to get a divorce, but there are instances when a divorce occurs.

Dr. James Dobson: Jo, your book *Beloved Unbeliever* is an optimistic book. It's not a pessimistic book. We've been talking about some pretty heavy things.

Jo Berry: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's look at the end of the book where you talk about the fact that an unequally yoked person can be happy. How can that be accomplished?

Jo Berry: At the chance of sounding terribly boring, first of all, the unequally yoked wife has to realize her marriage is not that much different than any other marriage. A pastor friend of mine one time in a sermon said that if you take a person who is an unbeliever and they come to Christ. That person had a nasty temper and a bad disposition and didn't manage money well and was hard to live with, for several years, you may have a Christian who has a nasty disposition, doesn't manage money very well and is hard to live with. These women need to realize that, of course, that tremendous spiritual burden of worrying about their husbands being condemned to Hell is going to be gone once they accept Christ. But beyond that, change takes time. Growth takes time, and there aren't going to be just instantaneous changes in that marriage. There'll be other problems.

The wife may be spiritually ahead of her husband because she is much more knowledgeable than he is, especially the longer she's been a Christian, so there



are other things. But some of the things that I share in the book that I think are positives are some dos for marital happiness that even had some don'ts in there. One of them is that the unequally yoked wife should expect to be happy in her marriage. Usually, we get what we expect. "When I teach women's Bible studies, I tell the gals, "Now, if I ask all of you, regardless of how happy your marriages are, to sit down and make a list of grievances that you have against your husbands, pet peeves, things that you really dislike about him or things he does that get on your nerves," I said, "in an hour, you could be so agitated at your husbands that you'd want to kick him out the door."

Dr. James Dobson: That really is true. It's where you want to put the emphasis.

Jo Berry: That's right. So if you're unequally yoked and you're married to a man who isn't a believer, you expect to be happy in your marriage. You approach your marriage from a positive aspect like all of us have to or our marriages aren't going to work. Secondly, one of the things I suggest is expect your husband to be unreasonable about spiritual things because he isn't spiritually appraised. It's just like many times when we're raising children, we expect them to be so mature about everything. My son had a teacher in second grade. One of the things she wrote on his report card was he acted immature. I thought, "Well, what do you expect of a seven-year-old?" It's the same thing with a husband who is not spiritually appraised. He's not going to understand spiritual things, he's going to be unreasonable about some of them. That's normal.

Also, you have to expect problems to be a part of life and a part of your marriage. That's true of mine, also, to look for positives in the person of your husband. Probably a lot of the basic reasons that you were attracted to him, that you were drawn to him when you first got married are still there. Don't obscure him by the fact that he isn't a Christian. Look at those positive things and concentrate on those. Ignore more or less the negatives. That's what we all have to do in our human relationships. See that it isn't that much different when you're unequally yoked. Being loyal, I talked about that before, and then rely on the character of God. When your husband fails you, God isn't going to. You're the bride of Christ, and Christ is going to be there as your bridegroom. That's a tremendous concept in Scripture, that Christ is your bridegroom, and He'll be there to help when the husband isn't.

Dr. James Dobson: All right, you're turning through the last pages of your book there and giving us some of the headings of the dos. How about the don'ts that turn out to be positives?

Jo Berry: All right, one of the don'ts, we touched on it before, but I think it needs to be stressed, is don't put up communication barriers, "Well, my husband isn't a Christian, so I'm not going to tell him this, or I'm going to withhold that." That folds the honesty of a relationship, so you need to communicate. You don't keep things back from your husband just because he isn't a Christian. Secondly, don't flaunt your spirituality. You have to be very, very careful. Again, I have in the book a situation about a gal that was talking about she had a friend come

over and she had fallen into a habit and she didn't even know it. She would put her husband down on things that related to Scripture, but he didn't know why. One of them was, she was so sure that she understood end times theology that when she and some friends and her husband were having a discussion about what should happen in Israel over a current political situation, everything her husband said, "Well, that is ridiculous," or, "That's not right," or, "That can't happen."

He didn't understand where she was coming from. So when her husband left the room, her friend, who also was a Christian, said to her, "What are you doing to Roger? Why are you on his case? Everything he says you take exception to." She said it was just like someone hit her over the head with a hammer. "I'm doing that because I think I understand what's going to happen, and he doesn't know." She said, "Well, fortunately, my husband didn't know why I'd been on his case, and so I was able to pull back. But he did notice a change in me, because I had been doing this as a habit pattern. I was flaunting my spirituality in that way." Also, don't be dogmatic. Dogmatism is deadly. "This is the way to do it, and this is the way you're going to be become a Christian, and this is how we're going to live our lives regardless."

One lady that I talked about in the book said that she had been going to a church for a number of years, and of course, she had been praying and praying that her husband would start going to church with her. So one Sunday he said, "I want to go to church with you." Of course, she was, oh, so excited and the Lord and everything, and they went to church. It happened to be that for the first time in many, many months or years or whatever that the pastor preached a sermon on money giving. Of course, this turned her husband off like nothing else in the world would. So her husband next week says, "I don't want to go back to church with you. Let's go somewhere else." The wife says, "But that's my church. That's where all my friends are and everything." She started arguing with him after she'd been praying for months and years that he would go to church with her.

Dr. James Dobson: She's just not flexible.

Jo Berry: Yeah. She said she had to change her thinking on that, obviously. Also, another don't is don't try to second-guess God. You cannot live your marriage in anticipation of when your husband comes to Christ.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, I hear that a lot from women where they've prayed-

Jo Berry: Now, that's being a good helper.

Dr. James Dobson: ... "I've prayed for him for two years, and the Lord still hasn't done it." He doesn't work on that kind of timetable.

Jo Berry: No, He doesn't.

Dr. James Dobson: It sometimes has to take years to bring him to the Lord.

Jo Berry: That's right. That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: Jo, you and I both could tell people a lot of war stories where things went from bad to worse. Have you seen some peace stories? Have you seen examples where a woman came to the Lord and she loved the Lord and she prayed for her husband and he did become a beloved believer?

Jo Berry: More peace stories than war stories, very definitely. That's where the hope comes in. Also, I've seen a lot of situations where the woman came to the Lord and the husband didn't and they had happy fulfilled lives together. Although it's a harder situation and the wife bears that terrible burden of knowing that her husband is separated from her an eternity, she knows that she's done everything she can as a wife for him, and that's her role.

Dr. James Dobson: And hope springs eternal too.

Jo Berry: And hope springs eternal, and you never know. You never know. You can't second-guess God.

Dr. James Dobson: Jo, this has been a very, very practical kind of discussion. Sometimes my guests and I get into philosophical kinds of things, but this has been right where people live. I'm sure that many people will relate to what you've had to say today. Bless you for being with us today.

Jo Berry: Thank you.

Roger Marsh: Well, friend, if you are in an unequally yoked marriage, I hope today's classic program here on Family Talk provided you with some hope and encouragement. We've been listening to Mrs. Jo Berry and her conversation with Dr. James Dobson as they discussed marriages between Christians and unbelievers. Before she went home to be with the Lord, Jo wrote an outstanding book called *Beloved Unbeliever*, and we have a link for it up on our website at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). Of course, Dr. Dobson also has a powerful book that would be a huge help for a family discovering that they have a marriage between an unbelieving spouse, a beloved unbeliever, and a Christ follower. The book is called *Love Must Be Tough: New Hope for Marriages in Crisis*. We'll be happy to send you a copy of that book as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

So go to [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk) and then click the link on the bottom of today's broadcast page. That's [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). By the way, if you're also looking for some practical marriage advice on the go, I encourage you to check out the brand new Dr. Dobson Minute. Here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we are remastering Dr. Dobson's practical, biblically-based transforming truths on marriage and parenting into 60-second audio

messages. We pray that this will be a huge encouragement, especially to young families on the go and provide them with practical insights to strengthen their marriages as well as improve their parenting skills. You can listen to the Dr. Dobson Minute right now when you go to [drdobsonminute.org](http://drdobsonminute.org). That's [drdobsonminute.org](http://drdobsonminute.org). I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again tomorrow for another edition of Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

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