



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Fatherhood Fears and Fun

Guest(s): Phil Callaway

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Roger Marsh: That's right, Dr. Dobson. And friend, thanks to generous listeners like you, Family Talk can reach more and more listeners with practical help and encouragement. To support Family Talk with your best gift, go online to drjamesdobson.org or call 877-732-6825.

Hello, everyone. You are listening to Family Talk, the radio ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, filling in for your host, psychologist, and bestselling author, Dr. James Dobson, today. As most of you know, Dr. Dobson has written numerous books on parenting over the years, and many of them have geared toward fathers. Now, I can personally attest that fatherhood can be extremely difficult and even a little scary at times, but you are responsible for educating and disciplining your children, while also loving and caring for them. So today, speaker Phil Callaway will address some of those fears and provide advice for Dads listening in.

Phil has been blessed with a great sense of humor when speaking on the topic of parenting. He's the author of *Laughing Matters*, *and I Used To Have Answers, Now I Have Kids*. Phil hosts a daily radio show called "Laugh Again," which can be heard around the world. He and his wife Ramona live in Canada and are the parents of three adult children. I think you're going to learn something from Phil's talk today, and you'll have a few laughs too. So here now is his presentation at a Past Promise Keepers event, on this edition of Family Talk.

Phil Callaway: My wife and I had three children in three years. Have any of you done better than that? Someone asked me what it's like to have three kids in three years and I said we are far more satisfied than the man who has \$3 million. Well, how so? Well, the guy with \$3 million wants more. We could not be more thankful for our kids. I really mean that. In some ways I think that our children teach us more about God than we teach them about God sometimes. Don't you agree? But lately, I have to tell you, I've been wondering about what they're learning. Do you ever think this way? I mean, we sit around the table supper time and we

have a nice little time there and I ask them questions. I ask one question and it's simply this. "So what did you learn today?" What do they respond? "What is the deal with this?"

Well, you know what? Our children a few months back brought report cards home, and we discovered they weren't lying. Here are some actual things that children are learning at school, things that they have written on tests. "Benjamin Franklin invented electricity by rubbing cats backwards. And declared a horse divided against his self cannot stand. Queen Victoria was the longest queen. She sat on a thorn for 63 years. Handel, the famous composer, was half German, half Italian and half English. Beethoven was so deaf, he wrote loud music. Shakespeare, you may not know some of these things. Shakespeare was famous for writing and performing tragedies, comedies, and hysterectomies. Christopher Columbus circumcised the earth with a 100-foot clipper.

I like this one. Our new teacher came to class and taught us all about fossils. Before she came to class, I didn't know what a fossil looked like." Have you had that teacher? Ah, children. They learn interesting things in Sunday school as well. Here are a few of the things they're learning. "The first commandment was when Eve told Adam to eat the apple. Solomon had 200 wives and 700 porcupines. The golden rule says to do one to others before they do one to you." "A Christian should have only one wife," wrote a little guy. "This is called monotony." And my personal favorite, "Lot's wife was a pillar of salt by day and a ball of fire by night."

Well, it has been one of those weeks. I have to tell you, quite frankly, when I have not been doing a whole lot of laughing. People have come into my office, things have come into my life, and they've made me wonder if there is really any hope at all for our world. I've been talking with Christian dads this week, and we both asked ourselves, "Is there hope for the next generation?" Flip on the TV set, open your newspaper and it makes you wonder, doesn't it? Do you ever worry about your kids? Do you ever wonder about the next generation? I received a letter from Dave in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan Bush. I want to read it to you.

"Dear Phil, I've enjoyed reading your books, but I really hope you're exaggerating when you tell stories about your children. You see, my wife is due in a month, and I'm a little frightened. No, I'm a lot frightened. In fact, sometimes I'd give anything to back out. I'm 21 and it's like my life is over. Friends of ours had their first child a year ago and they've hardly slept since. They think he's the cutest little guy on earth. I think he looks like ET. He requires more maintenance than their pickup truck, and he's already made a serious dent in their savings account. The husband changes diapers with a clothes pin on his nose, and I'm sure I'll be worse. I won't have a clue what to do when the baby arrives. I haven't picked up a kid in my life, and I'm scared to death I'll drop this one."

"I want to ask you, Phil, is there hope for me? Is there hope for my child? And also, did you feel pretty adequate for the task when you became a father? What can I do to prepare for fatherhood? Please answer, and please hurry. Signed, Dave." Well, here's my response. "Ah, Dave, Dave, Dave. When I was your age, fatherhood was the farthest thing from my mind. I was a newlywed who had good reason to be suspicious of children. My older brother had a few. In fact, one Thanksgiving dinner, I watched them put peas in their ears and corn in their diapers. It was disgusting. They blew pabulum out their noses and then they wanted a kiss. And you guessed it, their mother gave them one. That afternoon, as I lay peacefully on the sofa, sleeping off a Turkey hangover, my one-year-old nephew brought a ripe diaper to rest on my forehead.

I made a vow that day. I made a vow that day, Dave, I will have children just as soon as cows produce Coca-Cola. But four years later, my wonderful wife said, "Honey, let's have kids. Tons of them," and it sounded like a good idea at the time. May 31st, Dave. It was a Saturday. My friends played softball that day. I paced a hospital hallway with my wife, or at least I think it was my wife, but whereas Ramona had always been rather sweet and soft-spoken, this woman was more like Attila the Hun in a hospital gown. "Rub my back," she commanded. I pulled out that tennis ball. "Don't touch me," she hollered. This continued for what seemed like 14 years, until I found myself face-to-face with the first miracle I had ever witnessed. My firstborn son.

Sure he was a little wrinkly, Dave, but who could blame him? I held him close. I touched his tiny fingers, counted his toes, 10 of them. I looked into his eyes. They were blue like mine. "Steven," said my wife, with the widest smile I'd ever seen on her face. And then the most amazing thing happened. A revival, I suppose. As I looked into those eyes, those blue eyes, it was as if I heard these words. 'Callaway, for the first 25 years of your life, you've been a hypocrite. You've been close to the church, but far from God. You are holding in your arms the one person you'll never be able to hide it from. You think this little guy won't see it? You're naive. You think this little guy won't learn from what he sees? Think again.'

You know, my friends, people come up to me and ask me When I became a Christian, and I say May 31st, 1986. You see that night for the very first time in my life, I bowed my head broken before God, and I said, 'I'm sorry, Lord. Make me real.' It's been slow-going sometimes, Dave, but I believe God heard that prayer. Five years later, this same little boy looked up at me one night and he said, 'Daddy, I want to be like you.' And tears came to my eyes. I don't have all the child-rearing answers for you, Dave, but I do know this. If you want your child to love God, you love him first. You want to model integrity, keep your promises. You want your child to say no to drugs, start by cleaning out the liquor cabinet. You want your son to obey, be obedient to the still small voice of God. And if you want your life to be changed forever, have children, tons of them. P.S.: Don't forget the clothespins.' Guys...

Nietzsche, the famous philosopher, gave up on Christianity not because of a lack of evidence, but because of a lack of a role model who was real. Nietzsche's father was a minister, but he never connected with his son. Nietzsche once wrote of his dad, listen to this, "Does that thing up there in the pulpit ever laugh or cry? Does he ever feel anything? Does what he preach ever find itself in real human experience?" My friends, God today in this place is looking for a few real guys. I picked up *Time* Magazine this week and read a quote from Julian Lennon. The story was echoed in the Calgary Herald. When people come up to Julian Lennon in the street talking about their love for his father because he spoke the truth, they meet with a polite reserve. "From my point of view, he was a hypocrite," said Julian, the sixties child of late Beatle, John Lennon, and his wife Cynthia.

"Dad could talk about peace and love out loud to the world, but he could never show it to the people who supposedly meant the most to him, his wife and son. How can you talk about peace and love and have a family in bits and pieces? No communication, adultery, divorce? You can't do it, not if you're true and honest with yourself." Julian is 36 now. He was abandoned by his father when he was five. Only recently did he inherit a part of the vast Lennon estate worth about \$580 million. Julian said these words in *Time* Magazine. "The only thing my dad taught me was how not to be a father." I don't know about you. Man, when I read that, I had to search my heart. I try to do that quite often. What are my children learning from me? What are your children learning from you? One day, will my child say my dad was a hypocrite? Or will he say my dad wasn't perfect, but he was real? I tell you, I'd like to hear those words, wouldn't you?

Roger Marsh:

You're listening to Family Talk, and I'm Roger Marsh, just jumping in for a brief moment here. From all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we thank you for listening today and for making us a part of your day each and every day. Of course, we are a listener-supported Christian radio program, and it's because of you and your prayers and your faithful financial support that we're able to bring quality content to you and your family each and every day. Now, to find out more about how you can support the JDFI, visit drjamesdobson.org. And now, let's return to the program right here on Family Talk.

Phil Callaway:

We live in dark times, don't we? I don't have to reel off statistics to tell you that, but I want to tell you this. This is not a time for despair. God works best in the dark. Do you believe that? He always has. He always has. You know something else? God has chosen to use people like you and me to get the job done. God is looking for a few good guys. Guys who will run the race with perseverance and conviction. One of the most vital areas we will run the race is on the home front. True?

This afternoon, I want to talk to you about four very practical steps to being a real guy, a guy after God's own heart. I'm going to keep this really simple because I have attention deficit disorder and perhaps some of you do. In fact, I founded it back in about grade three, my teacher tells me. I'm going to use G-U-

Y-S to give you something you can take home and remember. Let's start with the G. Simply graceful. I am not talking about figure skating here. I am talking about a guy who is full of God's grace. How many of you have heard of recycling? A number of you, yes. But do you know who invented it? I did.

You don't believe me yet, but you will. In about grade five, when I was 10 years of age, my friend Gary and I established the gang of two. I don't know if you've heard of them out here, but anyway, we established the gang of two, and every summer day we went out and we took our father's shovels and we dug deep into the bowels of the earth and established a wonderful fort, put plywood across the hole, dirt over that, and weeds grew up. And there we sat, launching surprise attacks on people that came by. I don't recommend this to anyone, but we did it. We pretended they were Nazi U-boats and sometimes tanks. One day Gary looked at me and he spoke these fateful words. He said, "I'm bored." I was captain of the fort. It was my job to take his every word and turn it into adventure.

And so I said to Gary, I said, "How about we stop saving the fort and start saving the earth?" This was a brand new concept to both of us, but after I explained it to him, it made perfect sense. So we went down together. We took a brown paper bag and we went down to Main Street, Three Hills, and we started cleaning up every cigarette butt we could find, putting them in the paper bag and we said, "Boy, are these things ever disgusting? Can you believe people actually smoke these things?" "No, I can't believe it, but put them in the bag and we'll throw them in the trash." Elderly people came by and they looked at us and they said, "There is hope for this world. Look at these industrious children." We said, "Thank you, thank you very much." And we took that bag, and we took it back to our fort in the woods, and we recycled them. Every last one of them. In fact, we recycled pretty much anything we could get our lips around that summer.

Dried dandelions, tea leaves, cinnamon, cardboard, newspaper. Some of you know other things, but don't share them now, they will indict you. I was sitting on an airplane flying into Winnipeg yesterday. I looked up. Two amber symbols lit up. "No smoking seat belts." I thought, yeah, I'd have tried those. You burn your lips on the buckle, but I'd have tried them. It was a Wednesday that completely revolutionized my life. Gary came whipping along on his banana seat bicycle and fruit in the grass beside me, and he said, "You ain't going to believe it. It's too good to be true. You've got to guess." And I said, "What? Your mother bought you a whole fleet of motorcycles?" He said, "No, even better than that. I found a pack of them. It ain't even been opened." I said, "No way." He said, "Yes way." "No way." He said, "Come with me."

We drove on our banana seat bicycles two miles out of Three Hills to the north, and sure enough, in the tall shadow of a telephone pole was proof that Gary was not lying. A package of Players, filtered tip, unopened and beckoning. I knew the punishment for smoking in our town. At Prairie Bible Institute, my older brother told me. They cut your lips off. And so we were very careful. We

stripped the plastic off and we divided the pack evenly, 10 a piece. And we smoked those one by one right down to the filters, and for our two or three American speakers who are here, I just need to add that we inhaled. We stood to our feet. We could hardly stand to our feet. I said to Gary, "Let's never, ever, as long as we both shall live, touch another one of these things." We took tobacco stain hands on it, and I suggested also that we go back to the non-smoking zone. We had to push our bicycles. We could not ride them.

Half an hour later, Gary's mother was standing outside the family restroom wondering who had established a tobacco plantation on her property without securing permission. She opened the bathroom door, and there was Gary in the bathtub caught yellow handed. All he could say was, "I was smoking." But my friends, I was older, I was wiser. I knew that as ye smoked, so shall ye reek. And so, in an effort to keep the consequences of my own sins at bay, I sneaked silently up our back step in the door and into the bathroom, and there I found a medicine cabinet. You've seen one? Opened it. Do you remember spray deodorant? Right Guard, large can. I finished it. Full tube of toothpaste. I finished that too, and I was finally able to approach my parents. "My son, you smell nice." "Thank you. Thank you very much." And that night I crept into bed, a satisfied smile stuck to my face. No one will ever know.

My mother came into my room, opened the window, got some air going in there, and then she sat down on the bed and she said these words to me. She said, "How did it taste, son?" I said, "Supper was very nice, Mother, thank you very much." She didn't skip a beat. She said, "When I was a little girl, my grandpa let me smoke his pipe. I didn't much like it. How about you?" I said, "Me neither, Mom." And I closed my eyes and I put out my lips, because I knew the punishment. She could have cut my lips off, I suppose. She could have at least spanked me. This had been done before. She could have reminded me that no amount of toothpaste or deodorant will cover my sins, that they really will find me out. She could have reminded me that the story doesn't end there, but because of what Jesus did on an old rugged cross, we don't have to hide. We can approach God forever forgiven. Instead, she bent over and kissed me squarely on the forehead. And she said, "Son, I love you."

And I said, "Mom, I'll never smoke again." And then I said, "How did you know?" She said, "Well, Sonny, sometimes 10 year old boys forget that their parents have friends too." I heard my dad hollering from the family restroom, "Hey, has anyone seen the toothpaste?" Guys, you do not have to be a mother to be full of grace. Amen. Dads who experience God's grace in their lives pass it along to their children. I'm not saying we don't discipline our kids. We do. But the best discipline is administered by those who love us, who show us God's grace. Before Martin Luther came in touch with the grace of God, he said, "My own father was hard, unyielding and relentless. I cannot help but think of God that way." Will your children remember you as hard, unyielding and relentless, or will they remember you as a graceful guy, a grace recycler?

When I turned 35 a few years ago, my son, the same son I just told you about a few minutes back, looked up at me and he said, "Dad, how old are you again?" I said, "I'm 35." He said, "You're half dead." So I calmly tucked him in and kissed him and went to my study and removed him from the will. No, I didn't. But it got me thinking about how fast our lives speed by. And so I started checking into tombstones. What would I like on my tombstone? I'm 35, I better think of this. I found some really amazing ones out there. Someone said on their tombstone, "See, I told you I was sick." Someone else says, just simply, "he should have ducked." A lady in Florida had these horrible words etched on her husband's tombstone. He was known as a womanizer in their town. She had this put on his tombstone. "Frank, at least I know where you're sleeping tonight." Wow. Can you imagine that, speaking of your life? I now know what I want on my tombstone. "He found God's grace too amazing to keep to himself."

Roger Marsh:

This is Roger Marsh, and I've been sitting in behind the microphone for Dr. Dobson today, and I hope that you have appreciated this presentation from author and speaker, Phil Callaway, here on Family Talk. Learn more about Phil and his radio program, "Laugh Again," by visiting the broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org. There, you'll find a link to his website and you can also look through the books that he's written while you're on his site as well. Go to drjamesdobson.org and then click onto today's broadcast page for all that information. While you're online, be sure to jump over to our blog's page and read through our various entries there as well. Our writers tackle a wide variety of issues, including parenting, dealing with trauma, and evangelism. So if you're searching for more godly content, fill your day with our blogs at drjamesdobson.org. Well, that's all the time we have for today. Thanks again for listening. Be sure to join us again tomorrow for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Have a great day everyone.

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