



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Jesus Who Surprises – Part 1

Guest(s): Dee Brestin

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Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute, supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

Roger Marsh: Well, hello, and welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and I hope that you and yours had a very relaxing and peaceful weekend. As we begin another broadcast week together, I want to share with you a reminder that every day this month here in December, thanks to some very special friends of the ministry, we have a matching grant in place to double your impact. This means that every dollar you graciously donate to the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute here before the end of the year will be doubled. Now, if you'd like to donate to the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute online, it's very easy. Just go to drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. Or, you can make a donation over the phone when you call free 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825.

Now, today's program is a real special treat. Each day during the month of December, we feature our Best of Broadcasts, and we're currently in the middle of our Best of Broadcast Collection from 2022. Today's program is from the Family Talk archives from our 2021 Best of Broadcast Collection. Dr. Dobson had a conversation with his dear friend, Dee Brestin, about how Jesus always finds a way to surprise us. Dee shares her personal story of loss and how Jesus was truly alongside her through it all, every step of the way. In Philippians 4:19, the Apostle Paul writes, "And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus." Remember, Jesus truly loves us and loves to show it, even when we don't feel like He's there.

Now, if you aren't familiar with Dee Brestin, let me tell you a little bit more about her. She is a best-selling author, public speaker, and the founder of Dee Brestin Ministries. Many people also know her as a Bible teacher. In fact, she's the author of the best-selling books *The Friendships of Women* and *Falling in Love with Jesus*. She's also written over 20 Bible studies, including the book *Proverbs and Parables*. Tragically, Dee lost her husband Steve to cancer, but she remains eternally thankful for the love that they shared and their five children and numerous grandchildren who all love the Lord.

Let's join this special conversation right now, part of our Best of Broadcast Collection here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: I'm thankful to serve the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and we have a guest who feels the same way about that. She is my very dear friend, Dee Brestin. Dee is a best-selling author, a speaker, and a highly sought after Bible teacher. I first interviewed Dee over 30 years ago for her first book, *The Friendships of Women*. And that book is ... Dee, it's still out there, isn't it? Still available?

Dee Brestin: It sure is. I credit you with that.

Dr. James Dobson: You credit me? I didn't write it.

Dee Brestin: Yes, but you were such an encouragement to me. I really feel you opened the door for a ministry that has blessed me and I know many women.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I admire you so much for your dedication to the Lord and what you've done. How many books have you written now?

Dee Brestin: About 10 books and 20 Bible study guides.

Dr. James Dobson: And most of your time is spent in Bible study, isn't it?

Dee Brestin: It is. It is. And I have a prison ministry in the last 10 years that's been a real blessing, too. So that's been great.

Dr. James Dobson: Take us back 30 years.

Dee Brestin: Well, I remember when I got the call that you were going to interview me. I was jumping on the bed, I was so excited. I was scared during the interview, and my husband kept jumping up and taking pictures. You just put us at ease, and I calmed down.

I do feel that God gave me a message about friendship that women and men still need to hear. We are made in the image of a relational God, and we crave relationship. Women have a gift, I believe, for intimacy and a craving for it. I had learned so many things from Scripture, looking at the friendships in Scripture, that just became radioactive and changed my friendships. One of the things that I noticed was that God zooms His camera in on parting scenes and greeting scenes in the friendships of Mary and Elizabeth, Ruth and Naomi, David and Jonathan. I have learned to be alert when I meet somebody that God might be working. I prayed when I realized that, that if God gave me the opportunity, that I would be at the bedside when my parents were dying. And indeed, I was able to have a parting scene with my mother, my father, and my husband all within a three-year period. Those are precious moments. So things like that, learning how to value those special bittersweet moments and how to be a real friend.

Dr. James Dobson: In one of my early books, *What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women*, I talked about the great need of women for other women. A lot of women don't invest the time to make those kind of friendships, and I think they're the poorer for it. They desperately need each other, don't they?

Dee Brestin: Oh, they do. It took me a while to realize. I know I get grumpy if I'm deprived of fellowship. Our marriages will be better. Studies show that women who have close friendships have stronger marriages, are better mothers, so we need to take the time. A good warm friendship is like a good warm fire. It needs continual stoking.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, we'll talk more about that. Dee is a graduate of Northwestern University. She also studied at Covenant Seminary. Do you call yourself a minister, Dee?

Dee Brestin: Well, I would say that I'm a female shepherd.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, I like that. Well, as we've said, you minister to women in prison all over the world. You host a popular weekly Bible study by way of the website. I'm going to stop here to ask you how people can find that.

Dee Brestin: Well, they just go to my name, deebrestin.com. That's my website. I post a Bible study on Sunday, and there's continual interaction and comments, several hundred comments each week where people are digging into Scripture, like iron sharpening iron.

Dr. James Dobson: I'll never forget the time that you came and talked about the death of your beloved husband of 39, I believe. Wasn't it 39 years?

Dee Brestin: Yeah, 39 years. Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: He died of cancer, and that was in 2004.

Dee Brestin: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: You came and talked about getting through that crisis. How have you made it? I just can't imagine the loss of Shirley. How did that go down?

Dee Brestin: I think that what I've learned in retrospect, there's a verse in Hebrews 12. I think it applies right now to our tumultuous times, that God is going to shake the world, removing the things that can be shaken so we can be thankful we have a kingdom that cannot be shaken. When the props are knocked out from under you, it separates what's eternal from what's transitory. I grieved so much the loss of Steve, but I am thankful for the years we had. I know it's not the end of the story. I know I will see him again, but it also has caused me to be thankful for a kingdom that cannot be shaken and to press into Jesus with all my heart. I really feel, Dr. Dobson, that my best books have been written since Steve died

because I have experienced the presence of God out of my desperate neediness.

Dr. James Dobson: There are so many widows around us who are going through what you have. My mother was one of the saddest. She dearly loved my dad from the moment they fell in love with each other, and he was everything to her. When he suddenly died just sitting at a table and he leaned over into her plate and was gone, she could not cope with that. I mean, she lived 11 more years, and she was grieving when she died. What do you say to the women out there who have lost what they could not afford to lose?

Dee Brestin: I would tell them that God gives us a prayer book in the Scriptures, and that is the Psalms. Philip Yancey said that he was told when he was feeling down or depressed to go to the Psalms. And he said, "I'd go to one of the winteriest Psalms that said, 'Where are you Lord? How long will you abandon me?' And I'd come away frostily depressed until I realized that the Psalms are not like other books in the Bible where God is speaking to us. It's like you are looking over the shoulder of the Psalmist's prayer journal, and he is praying his genuine, honest thoughts. And when he is down, he is honest about it."

More than a third of the Psalms are laments. I learned the lament typically has three parts. First, you are honest. You tell God how you're feeling, and then there's a pause and you're still, because prayer is meant to be a dialogue. The Spirit will usually remind you of God's character, and then you can trust in Him. I'd like to share a story of how I did that after Steve died and how God spoke to me.

Dr. James Dobson: I wish you would.

Dee Brestin: Well, I hated to go to bed after Steve died, because we had some of our best times talking together in bed. And if I had trouble sleeping, he would often pray over me or sing over me, or he'd say a nursery rhyme, like, "Wynken, Blynken, and Nod sailed out on a moonlight night." And I told the Lord, I lamented. I said, "You promised You would be a husband to the widow, but I don't feel like You are even here."

And then a memory came to me, Dr. Dobson, of when I was a first time mom and I was trying to nurse my colicky baby. We were in a little tiny apartment. Steve had to sleep, because he was in medical school. And I would run to that baby, unbuttoning my bathroom as I ran so as not to lose time. I'd take him, and I'd put him onto my breast, and he acted like I wasn't there. He wouldn't latch on. He'd scream. He'd get red. He'd kick. And finally, after like a good 10 minutes, he'd finally find me and calm down, and his eyes would go to half-mast.

And I'd think, "What was all that about? I was right here." And I felt the Lord saying, "Dee, what is all this about? I am right here." He ministered to me. And

the next morning I woke up, and because it's my habit to pray through the Psalms, I just happened to be on Psalm 131, which says, "Surely, I have quieted my soul like a weaned child with his mother." And I thought, "Oh, my goodness, God. You are talking to me."

I started to study it, because I knew God was speaking to me. The first verse is, "I will not concern myself with things too wonderful for me." I thought, "I've read that verse somewhere else. Where is it?" And then I remembered it's in Job, at the end of Job when Job has wanted his day in court with the Lord, and God starts giving him all these pictures of, "Were you there when I set the oceans in place? Were you there?" And then Job finally says, "I put my hand over my mouth. I will not concern myself with things too wonderful." And I thought, "Okay, I don't need to understand all this. I don't need to know why you took Steve. All I need to know is that You are right here with me and that You are smart enough to make the world, and I can trust You." And I calmed down.

I can't tell you, Dr. Dobson, how the Psalms of lament can help a person who is suffering not to back up from God, but to get some real wisdom and comfort.

Dr. James Dobson: Has that been comforting to the women that you talk to? You know a lot of widows, don't you?

Dee Brestin: I do know a lot of widows.

Dr. James Dobson: It's a tough journey, isn't it?

Dee Brestin: It is a tough journey. Steve and I used to talk about, "How do we do this? Because one of us is going to go before the other." He said, "We've got to help each other find strength in God now so that we keep doing that after the other is gone." And I am thankful too, that God really is a God of all comfort. He doesn't give us comfort for what we are just imagining will happen. He gives us comfort when it really happens.

Dr. James Dobson: And the greatest comfort is you're going to see him again.

Dee Brestin: That's so true. Isn't that great?

Dr. James Dobson: That's going to be some reunion, isn't it?

Dee Brestin: That is going to be some reunion.

Dr. James Dobson: How did you meet him?

Dee Brestin: We met at Northwestern. I sat in front of him hoping he would notice me, and he did.

Dr. James Dobson: How long after that did he ask you out?

Dee Brestin: Well, he followed me after that first class. I remember it was cold, but I was really shaking because I was so nervous that he was following me and hoping he was going to talk to me. I remember he introduced himself, and then he took his coat off and put it around me, and my knees nearly buckled.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, man. What did he do for a living?

Dee Brestin: He was an orthopedic surgeon, and he worked with four other Christian doctors who took turns on the mission field. It was a wonderful practice in Nebraska. Good man, and I'm very thankful for him.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you ever ask the Lord why He took him?

Dee Brestin: I did. I said, "There's so many lousy doctors and husbands and fathers. Why didn't you take one of those?" But I think His answer was that night when He told me that He knows what He's doing. He set the stars in place, and I can trust Him. And it is true. In Isaiah, it says He takes some in order to spare them from things. So, I just trust that our God is good and He knows what He's doing, and one day there will be answers.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you've got a new book. I guess, from what you said, this is your 10th.

Dee Brestin: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: It's called *The Jesus Who Surprises: Opening Our Eyes to His Presence in All of Life and Scripture*. That's a neat thought, Jesus who surprises. How does he surprise us?

Dee Brestin: Well, He was always surprising people in Scripture, and I think He still does. It is based on the walk to Emmaus, where it's after the resurrection. He comes up to these two grieving disciples, and they are kept from recognizing Him. I think there's some humor in this, because He's saying, "Why are you so sad?" And they say, "Are you only a stranger to Jerusalem? You don't know what happened?" I love that, because it reminds me of when Paul is talking to King Agrippa. He says, "These things were not done in a corner." Everybody knew about Jesus and His miracles and the crucifixion. Then He tells them as He walks along beside them that He had to die and rise again, and it is all through their Scriptures, which is the Old Testament.

What I love about that, Dr. Dobson, is that every prophet, every priest, every slain lamb, every suffering servant, every bridegroom points to a better priest, a better prophet, the best slain lamb, the best bridegroom. The whole Bible is about Jesus. And in this day where so many people are having trouble believing that the Bible is the word of God, I say, "Listen, there are 66 books written over many centuries, many continents, many cultures by men who for the most part

had no contact with each other, but it's one story and it all runs together." The lamb is the plot line from Genesis to Revelation. There is a bridegroom plot line from Genesis to Revelation. It is one story. This can't happen unless there's one author behind all these writers.

Dr. James Dobson: That is one of my favorite Scriptures in the entire gospel. I mean, here you have these two disciples who had believed Jesus when He said that He was the son of God. They knew He was the Messiah, and then they were expecting such great things that He was going to be a ruler, the things that were written about Him in Isaiah. All of a sudden, he's gone. They saw Him. They saw Him crucified. They saw Him hanging there on the cross. They heard Him say, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Their world crashed. And as they walked along, they didn't know that Jesus was three feet away from them.

Dee Brestin: I know it. I know it.

Dr. James Dobson: I think that's the message to all of us. There are times when we feel like things have not gone right, and we are sad. Certainly, you were when Steve died. You felt alone, "Where is my husband, my friend, my companion." But then to realize that all the time you were lonely, Jesus was three feet away. I love that concept.

Dee Brestin: Right. I love that, too. It's so great. He uses a phrase with them from the books of Moses to the prophets, which is a phrase that is a Greek word, zeugma, that means from front to back. In other words, He's saying, "I am in every single book of your Bible from front to back, and so is the prediction that I would die and rise again, the gospel."

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you talk in your book, Dee, about three places where God surprises with His presence.

Dee Brestin: Well, it begins with the books of Moses when we see how the story began and all went wrong. And then in the Psalms and the poetical books, we learn how to live in this hard story, in this fallen world. And then we go to the prophets, and I stay in the majesty of Isaiah where we learn how the story will end. That's how the book is divided. We see Jesus in Genesis 1. We have God the Father creating the world, the Spirit hovering over the face of the Deep, and then we know Jesus is the Word from John 1, speaking the world into creation. We see the pronoun, "Let Us create man in Our image." So there He is, right in the beginning.

Dr. James Dobson: Introduce Him to us again, Dee. Who is Jesus?

Dee Brestin: "Jesus is the eternal life," is what John says. The reason that is important is that all the other religions say if you do this or you do that over there, you will have eternal life. But Jesus says, "No, I am eternal life. If you trust in Me, you will

have eternal life." And Jesus brings us the difference between religion and the gospel.

One of the stories that I tell in *The Jesus Who Surprises*, and I even had the man that did it, act it out for the video curriculum. I had Ron and Debbie over for dinner, because I felt like they were coming so close to understanding who Jesus really was. Debbie was the one in our seeker's study. After dinner, we were clearing the dishes away. Ron got behind the counter, and he's a great big guy, Dr. Dobson. He worked for FEMA. He started pounding on the counter at me, and he said, "What you've been teaching my wife about Jesus is not what I've heard in church all my life." And I said, "How is it different, Ron?" And he said, "You told her that all she has to do is put her trust in what Jesus did at the cross and she'll go to Heaven."

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, boy. What a question? What a question?

Dee Brestin: I know. I know. I said, "Well, that's right, Ron." And then he pounded on the counter again and he said, "Are you telling me she doesn't have to be good?" And I thought, "Oh, I get it." I ran and I got this chart from Tim Keller that shows the difference between religion and the gospel that he allowed me to put in *The Jesus Who Surprises*. There's a whole list of differences, but the first one says, "In religion, I try to be very good in hopes that I can get into Heaven. With the gospel, I am forgiven. And because I am so grateful for what Jesus did at the cross, I want to be good."

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, my.

Dee Brestin: He read through this whole list, Dr. Dobson, and there's so many interesting differences. He looked up, and he had tears in his eyes. And he said, "I guess I'm religious, so now what do I do?" It was wonderful, and he is such a changed man. I mean, they just had their 50th anniversary, and they say their marriage has never been like this. It's wonderful.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, Dee, we're out of time. I wanted to tell people again, now they can learn more about what we're talking about. The name of your new book is *The Jesus Who Surprises: Opening Our Eyes to His Presence in All of Life and Scripture*. You keep on writing, and you keep on honoring Jesus in all that you do. You're a blessing to Shirley and me.

Dee Brestin: Thank you so much, Dr. Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: We will talk to you again tomorrow.

Dee Brestin: Great. Thank you.

Roger Marsh: I hate to break in right here, but we have run out of time for today's broadcast. That concludes part one of Dr. James Dobson's conversation with author,

speaker, and Bible study leader Dee Brestin here on Family Talk. But of course, there is so much more that these two old friends have to unpack, and they'll be doing it tomorrow on part two of this conversation, a program we've entitled The Jesus Who Surprises.

I'm Roger Marsh, and as we revisit the Best of Broadcast programs every day this month, I want to remind you if you'd like to have your own copy of the commemorative six-CD collection of our best-of programs for 2022, just visit drjamesdobson.org/bestof2022. That's drjamesdobson.org/bestof2022. We'll be happy to send you a copy as our way of thanking you for a suggested donation of \$50 or more in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. So go to drjamesdobson.org/bestof2022. This collection contains 18 of our most popular programs from the past year, covering everything from your marriage to your kids, and even the culture around you. This would even make a thoughtful Christmas gift for a loved one, as well. So to get your copy of the Best of Broadcast 2022 Collection, go to drjamesdobson.org. And remember, if you'd prefer, you can also ask for this as a digital download, as well.

Finally, we want to share with you that each day this month here in December, thanks to some special friends of the ministry, we have a matching grant in place that will double your financial impact. That means that every dollar you graciously donate to the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute will be doubled. If you'd like to make your donation online, go to drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. Or, give us a call at 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825.

Well, we hope you've enjoyed today's selection from our Best of Broadcast. Please join us again tomorrow for part two of Dr. Dobson's discussion with Dee Brestin. Till then, may God continue to richly bless you and your family as you grow closer and deeper in relationship with Him. Join us again tomorrow for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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