



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Ministry of Hymns – Part 2

Guest(s): Joni Eareckson Tada and Robert and Bobbie Wolgemuth

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Dr. James Dobson: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson, and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Bobbie Wolgemuth: The world was changed because Martin Luther believed that next to the word of God, a hymn and theology in music was the way to totally change the mind of the people, and get them to focus on truly who God is, and to have biblical knowledge inside of their life in such a passionate way. In fact, he often would say that the devil would flee before the sound of praise.

His whole thing was getting the people to praise God and then giving them something to hang onto. Remember that these people were being burned at the stake if they read the Bible in their own German tongue. Often, they said the people that were taken to the stake, they had a hymn on their lips as they were dying.

Roger Marsh: Welcome back to Family Talk and this second installment of Dr. Dobson's classic program, featuring conversation, music, and song with Joni Eareckson Tada, and Robert and Bobbie Wolgemuth. I'm Roger Marsh. That clip you just heard was from Bobbie Wolgemuth speaking on yesterday's program, part one of our series called "The Ministry of Hymns."

Today, Dr. Dobson and his guests will continue their discussion around the book that Joni, Robert, and Bobbie co-wrote with Pastor John MacArthur. It's called *O Worship the King: Hymns of Assurance and Praise to Encourage Your Heart*. *O Worship the King* is unfortunately out of print, but there are still copies available. We have a link for you where you can purchase the book at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

Remember, if you missed part one of today's conversation, which we have called "The Ministry of Hymns," part one, you can find it at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk as well. Joni Eareckson Tada has been a guest on Family Talk many, many times. In fact, Dr. Dobson considers Joni to be one of, if not, the most influential Christians of our time.

In case you don't know her story, Joni became a paraplegic at the tender age of 17, but by God's grace, over 50 years later, she is still spreading the good news of the gospel from her wheelchair. She is the CEO and founder of the ministry called Joni and Friends, and her radio ministry turns 40 this year.

From all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we would like to express our gratitude and congratulations to Joni and her team for such a milestone. Robert Wolgemuth is the next guest on today's broadcast. He's a well-respected Christian literary agent. He's represented many successful Christian authors over his 30-plus-year career, including Dr. Dobson at one time.

Robert is also a speaker and best-selling author or co-author of over 20 books, including *She Calls Me Daddy*, *The Most Important Place on Earth*, and *What's in the Bible: The Story of God Through Time and Eternity*. Robert is married to Nancy DeMoss Wolgemuth, and they reside in Michigan.

Our third guest for today's classic program is Robert's dearly departed wife, Bobbie Wolgemuth. Bobbie passed away in 2014, but you can still hear her passion for worship and truth throughout today's program. Bobbie was also an accomplished Bible teacher and the author or co-author of several books, including *God's Wisdom for a Mother's Heart* and the four-book "Gold Medallion" best-selling series, *Hymns for a Kid's Heart*, co-authored with Joni Eareckson Tada.

Bobbie is survived by Robert, their two married daughters, two sons-in-law, and five grandchildren. Well, let's go now to this highly entertaining and very musical program, which was recorded in front of a studio audience. That's on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Robert Wolgemuth: Well, one of the songs on *O Worship the King* is "O Sacred Head Now Wounded." Joni and Bobbie are in the studio. We're all in the studio. They're singing, and they're singing like two women, literally standing at the foot of the cross.

It was unbelievable how... In fact, John MacArthur, and Paul Plew, the director, and I were standing there. We were weeping because we were drawn to that moment, these women looking at the crucified Savior, really wondering if this was the end. We, of course, know that it was only the beginning.

Being filled with a great sense of awe, being there at that moment was a tremendous experience. The phrase at the end of the first verse says, "What joy to call Him mine," that all of this leads toward... We fellowship in His sufferings, and He gives us the joy of knowing Him, of filling us with His Spirit. That became one of our favorites, just to hear these women at the foot of the cross, singing this incredible hymn.

Joni, Bobbie and Choir: O sacred Head, now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down, now scornfully surrounded with thorns, Thine only crown. O sacred Head, what glory, what bliss till now was Thine! Yet, though despised and gory, I joy to call Thee mine.

What Thou, my Lord, hast suffered was all for sinners' gain; mine, mine was the transgression, but Thine the deadly pain. Lo, here I fall, my Savior! 'Tis I deserve Thy place; look on me with Thy favor, vouchsafe to me Thy grace.

What language shall I borrow to thank Thee, dearest Friend, for this, Thy dying sorrow, Thy pity without end? O make me Thine forever! And should I fainting be, Lord, let me never, never, outlive my love for Thee.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, that's absolutely beautiful. Joni, what's the history of that hymn?

Joni Eareckson Tada: Bernard of Clairvaux. We're talking about a saint who lived in the Dark Ages. I think in the year 900, he had penned the words to this hymn. To think that there were people back then whom we have such a deep, intimate union, a connection with.

Robert Wolgemuth: We were talking earlier about visiting with our grandmothers who are... In my case, Bobbie has a grandmother who's living who's 99. I have a grandmother who's living who's 105. We were there two years ago when she was 103, and she hasn't outlived her love for Christ. He says in that text, "And may I never, never outlive my love for thee." Here are these people who have lived over a century, and they have not outlived their love for Him.

Dr. James Dobson: We need to hear those lyrics. Now we just heard them sung, but I'm not sure that all of us captured the poetry of it and the theology.

Bobbie Wolgemuth: Interestingly-

Dr. James Dobson: Read it for us.

Bobbie Wolgemuth: Bernard was a monk, and he wanted to paint a picture, verbally, of the Christ on the cross, and the different parts of his body, and looking at that. He starts with, "O sacred Head now wounded, with grief and shame way down. Now scornfully surrounded with thorns thine only crown. O sacred Head, what glory, what bliss till now was thine! Yet, though despised and gory, I joy to call thee mine."

Joni Eareckson Tada: I love that verse, which says, "What language shall I borrow to thank thee, dearest friend?" Don't you ever feel like that? Where in the world can find adjectives enough or adverbs to express to the Lord, Jesus Christ, our affection, our fervent devotion for Him and here there was a monk in 1,500 years ago who's just as desperate to look for the adjectives. What language shall we borrow?

My mother, Dr. Dobson, is 87 years old. Here's the woman who taught me and my sisters so many of those wonderful hymns. She's frail, mentally, struggles with depression, went through breast cancer, broke her shoulder on the tennis court at the age of 84, has seen all of her friends pass on. It's hard for her just to get going during the day.

We have this little tradition where I telephone her, and we'll talk. Then I'll say, "Mom, what's the hymn for the day? Lately, she's been a little too weak to come up with ideas. She said, "Oh, Joni, you'll have to pick one today."

The other day I picked, "Living for Jesus a life that is new." As she sang along with me and I could hear the frailty in her voice over the telephone wires, I reminded her at the close of our time together. I said, "Mom, there's always a reason to keep going. Even though it's hard for you at the age of 87, Mom, your life can be new if you keep living for Jesus each day."

For my mother who looks to me for strength and leadership now, she'll see me in this wheelchair. She'll say to me with her weak voice, "If you can do it, I can do it." I will often say back to her, "Mommy, I can't do it, but Jesus can. Through Him, we can do all things. We can keep living for Jesus each and every day, fresh and new." That's the power of a hymn and the words that can be life-altering for someone who's got a pretty fearful heart.

Dr. James Dobson: If you look at the content of most of our sermons today, they emphasize, more often, getting through today or tomorrow instead of looking forward to Heaven, and yet you go back to the old hymns of the church. Most of them focus, one way or another, on-

Joni Eareckson Tada: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: On Heaven.

Robert Wolgemuth: Right.

Joni Eareckson Tada: One day He's coming, O glorious day! How we can't wait.

Dr. James Dobson: When we all get to Heaven.

Joni Eareckson Tada: That's right. That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: We all have sung that one a thousand times.

Robert Wolgemuth: We sure have.

Joni Eareckson Tada: Thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: Would you all like to express appreciation to these folks? Speaks for itself, doesn't it?

Joni Eareckson Tada: That does. How about if we all sing a hymn? Could we sing Amazing Grace?

Dr. James Dobson: All right. Let's sing together.

Joni Eareckson Tada: Could we do that?

Dr. James Dobson: Let's do it.

Joni Eareckson Tada: "Would you sing with us in the gallery? Would you? Amazing grace! how sweet the sound, That saved a wretch; like me! I once was lost, but now am found, Was blind, but now I see."

There's somebody in the front row, maybe 9, 10 years old. You knew the words. I'm impressed. Thank you, friends.

Dr. James Dobson: We've been talking about the theology of the hymns. Think of the theology of those lyrics, "Twas grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved."

Robert Wolgemuth: That's right.

Joni Eareckson Tada: Wow.

Dr. James Dobson: What a great concept.

Robert Wolgemuth: It is a great concept.

Dr. James Dobson: It has both of those things.

Robert Wolgemuth: That's right. It does.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh my. Well, what concerns me goes back to my question that the generation who was raised on these hymns and that loves them the most is passing. The question is, will the baton be handed to the next generation?

Bobbie Wolgemuth: I think that's why we were encouraged by the Master's Choir. These kids study hymnology in their college curriculum. There is nothing more outstanding than to see these young people with faces open to the microphones, just singing with their hearts, these old hymns. I think it is happening. I think the young people are going to lead the way.

Robert Wolgemuth: In fact, Bobbie, tell the story about when your mother was just a few days from her own death.

Bobbie Wolgemuth: Oh. My mother knew she was going to die. The doctor had said, "You probably have two or three weeks left." I flew right away to Pennsylvania and joined my two sisters. She asked me, knowing that I sing. I'm the only one that did. She said, "Would you sing at my funeral?" I said, "Mother, I can't sing at your funeral."

She didn't say anything else about it. Then three days before she was incoherent, which was about a week before she died, I was having breakfast with her. We were then sitting next to the couch with each other. She said, "I had a dream last night." She said, "I dreamed that I walked through this tunnel. On the other side of the tunnel was the most glorious music."

She said, "There were instruments everywhere, but I didn't recognize one of them." I said, "Mother, that was a vision of Heaven. God was showing you what you're going to." She said, "Yes, and you're going to sing." I said, "Okay, I'll sing at your funeral."

Dr. James Dobson: I will sing.

Bobbie Wolgemuth: And I did. I sang at her funeral.

Robert Wolgemuth: Just talk about what you sang because it's-

Bobbie Wolgemuth: I sang, "But just think of stepping on shore and finding at Heaven, of touching a hand and finding at God's, of breathing new air and finding it celestial, of waking up in glory and finding it home." I sang a hymn also, but she wanted that one song. I sat down next to my dad after the song, and then I fell apart, but I made it through that song. I just knew. That and "It is Well With My Soul," I sang at my mom's funeral.

Joni Eareckson Tada: I was at a fundraiser for the American Diabetic Association in Los Angeles. The head of it, Dr. Alice Bessman, a friend of my parents from Baltimore who had come to California... She was there when I was injured. Came to town to speak at Johns Hopkins. A gentleman from Rancho Los Amigos Hospital, one of the premier rehab centers in the United States back then, Dr. Nichols... She begged him to please come to the state hospital to see this 17-year-old girl and give an assessment of sorts. She was trying very hard to get me out of that state institution and over to Rancho in California for good rehab.

I can't remember this, but she told me this just a few short months ago. She said, "Don't you remember the day Dr. Nichols and I visited you?" I said, "No, I can't remember. What happened?" She said, "Joni, he took a pin, and he started down with your ankle and pricked your skin to see if you could feel it. He worked his way up your body."

Can you feel this? I'd say, "No." "Can you feel this? No. Got to my hip, my chest. Can you feel this? No, no. I was so anxious, she said. Finally, she said, "You came out with, 'No, no, I can't feel that, but I can sing. I can sing.'"

Dr. James Dobson: Did you really?

Joni Eareckson Tada: I proceeded to start singing this hymn, she said, and I didn't even know that.

Dr. James Dobson: Joni, how in the world did you sing in the midst of a-

Joni Eareckson Tada: I was flat on my back.

Dr. James Dobson: Depressing news like that.

Joni Eareckson Tada: I was flat on my back. I was a Young-Lifer. I had come to Christ at Young Life. Again, back in those days, they taught you hymns, "Man of Sorrows," and "Can It Be," "Oh, the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus." A Young-Lifer and plus, in my own church, reformed Episcopalian, I'd learned all these hymns.

I was so desperate to please this important man from Rancho Los Amigos so I could do something. I can't feel, but I can sing. I broke out into song. I don't remember that, but when she shared that with me a couple of months ago, I thought, "Thank you, Lord. That was your grace. You did that. You were there. You were sustaining me even when I was depressed."

Dr. James Dobson: Joni, I'm going to spring something on you, but it really shouldn't be a surprise because whenever you come, there's a song that you sing. You've sung it on two previous occasions. I want you to do it again.

Joni Eareckson Tada: "Though I spend my mortal lifetime in this chair, I refuse to waste it living in despair, and though others may receive gifts of healing, I believe that He has given me a gift beyond compare. For Heaven is nearer to me, and at times it is all I can see. Sweet music I hear, coming down to my ear, and I know that it's playing for me! For I am Christ the Savior's own bride, and redeemed, I'm gonna stand by His side. He will say "You wanna dance?" And our endless romance will be worth all the tears I have cried."

Dr. James Dobson: Oh my.

Joni Eareckson Tada: I do love that song. That's a wonderful song.

Dr. James Dobson: There's a not dry eye here.

Bobbie Wolgemuth: There goes my mascara.

Joni Eareckson Tada: It's going to be reality and I can't wait. Heaven's on the horizon. I think one of the hallmarks of people who come through suffering, and can follow the Apostle

Paul out the other side, and learn how to rejoice, not only learn how to be content, as it says, but learn to rejoice, is the blessing of a song.

Dr. James Dobson: Joni, is that religious propaganda for those who don't know you? I mean, is that for real? Do you really, inside yourself, as you sit in that wheelchair... You will never walk in this life, barring a miracle that's unforeseen. Are you still optimistic because of the death of Christ and the promise of the resurrection?

Joni Eareckson Tada: The best way I can answer that is to say that every morning, with the girls who get me up, if my husband is not there to get me up... He leaves for work early. The girls who get me up. There's about seven or eight of them who, on seven different mornings, get me up. One of the first things we do after I'm up in my wheelchair, with hair brushed and teeth brushed, is to crack open the hymn devotional for the day.

"What is the hymn for today?" we'll say. Yesterday, when I got up, it was, "We're marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion! We're marching upward to Zion the beautiful City of God." Dr. Dobson, if I wake up in the morning and the encroachments of my disability are painful, if I am weary, if I am tired of the aches and the struggles of being 50 years old, 51 years old, and in a wheelchair for three and a half decades, it is a hymn that we grab hold of. It is the Word of God that reinforces the perspective.

If you don't feel like you can face the day, then grab a hold of that biblical truth that will force your body into submission. As the Apostle said, "I beat my body into submission." I won't let my emotions drag me down the tubes. I have to jerk the aorta of my heart right side up with a hymn almost every morning. Lo and behold, before 10, 20, 30 minutes passes, I can move into the day with a brighter perspective and have the joy that God's word assures me of having if I grab hold of His grace.

Dr. James Dobson: Joni, just hearing those words are why you're here today.

Robert Wolgemuth: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: I mean, the Lord brought us together today just to have our listeners, and have us, and have me hear what you just said. There's a whole sermon in there. I wonder, Robert and Bobbie, if we will do as well with the coming trials in our lives?

Robert Wolgemuth: That's right. That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: Because it comes to everybody, as Joni has done.

Robert Wolgemuth: Well, she sets an example. There's a transparency there. This is what you're saying. Your listeners aren't here, and they can't see what we are seeing. There's a love for Jesus. There's a transparency. Joni doesn't live every day

victoriously like some who would say that Jesus lifts you above this and you never have to face it.

Joni Eareckson Tada: Right.

Robert Wolgemuth: She would never say that.

Dr. James Dobson: It's in the trial.

Robert Wolgemuth: The fellowship of His sufferings would be one of the hallmarks of this woman who knows Christ because, not in spite of, but because of her sufferings. In fact, do you remember maybe five years ago, four years ago, you called in the middle of the night?

Joni Eareckson Tada: I remember that. I was desperate and in pain, and I didn't think I could go on. There had been a couple of midnight moments at 2:00 AM when I just could not wake up my husband, Ken, another time. He had to get up and go to work. I just couldn't bring myself to ask him to turn me one more time on the pillows. I knew that your wife, Bobbie... I knew that Bobbie had suffered terrible chronic back pain. I telephoned you guys, remember?

Robert Wolgemuth: Oh, of course.

Joni Eareckson Tada: How do you do it? How do you keep on going? Robert, I think you hit the nail in the head when you said that in Christ, we are not lifted above the sufferings. This is not some kind of ethereal self-denial, Pollyanna way of looking at our problems. I think on the phone that night... I believe we even sang a hymn together.

Bobbie Wolgemuth: We did.

Joni Eareckson Tada: There was a fellowship, a koinonia, of sharing in the sufferings of Christ, knowing that the weaker we are, the harder we lean on Him, and the harder we lean on Him, the more sweet, the more intimate. You hear His heartbeat. You get His EKG reading. You get His perspective. His lifeblood starts coursing through your veins. There is a sweetness to the Savior.

All these old hymns about how precious or how sweet the Savior is... When I was a kid, I never understood that language. It seemed so archaic, and out-of-date, and old-fashioned. How can the savior be sweet? Once you suffer and go through affliction, there is a honey combness. There is a taste. Taste and see that the Lord is good. There is that sweetness.

Dr. James Dobson: Thank you all for being our guests. It's a pleasure to have you all here. I always enjoy our times together. Name of the book is *O Worship the King*. Our guests are Robert and Bobbie Wolgemuth and Joni Eareckson Tada. Come back and see us again, will you?

Robert Wolgemuth: We will.

Bobbie Wolgemuth: We'd love to.

Robert Wolgemuth: Thank you.

Roger Marsh: Great encouragement from our guests on Family Talk today. Along with our host, Dr. James Dobson, they've been talking about Joni, Robert, and Bobbie's book called *O Worship the King: Hymns of Assurance and Praise to Encourage Your Heart*.

O Worship the King was published back in 2000, but earlier this year, Joni Eareckson Tada released a new book also about hymns. It's called *Songs of Suffering: 25 Hymns and Devotions for Weary Souls*.

If you'd like to learn more about today's guests, their book, *O Worship the King*, or Joni's new book, *Songs of Suffering*, just go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk, or give us a call at (877) 732-6825. That's (877)732-6825.

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