



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Jim & Jill Kelly: A Family Restored – Part 2

**Guest(s):** Jim and Jill Kelly

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Dr. James Dobson: A prescription for renewed family life could begin with this simple phrase, slow it down.

Roger Marsh: Here's Dr. James Dobson for Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: There's no doubt that the modern world has become terribly hectic. People work hard and they play hard, and they rarely have time to talk or even to sit down and rest. This kind of killing pace isn't healthy for individuals or for family life. We all need to creatively waste some time now and then, to walk along kicking rocks and thinking pleasant thoughts. But the whole world seems to conspire against such reconstructive activities. I can provide a simple prescription for a healthier, happier life, but it must be implemented by the whole family.

First, add no new time-consuming activity of any type until you agree to remove one of equal dimensions. Second, as a family you must simply resolve to slow your pace. Learn to say no gracefully. Resist the temptation to chase after more pleasures, more hobbies, more social entanglements. Hold the line with the tenacity of a tackle for a professional football team. Now this is no easy task in our fast-paced world, but I can assure you that the effort pays off. If the commitment is deep enough, even the busiest of families can slow themselves down and find a new measure of sanity and wholeness.

Roger Marsh: To get involved, go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org).

Welcome back to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. And however you've joined us today, whether on the air or online, we are glad that you're here. Our guests on the program once again are Jim and Jill Kelly. Yesterday on the broadcast, Jim shared that despite his success as the quarterback of the NFL Buffalo Bills, his life was in pieces. He and his wife Jill explained how their faith helped them endure difficult trials. Now together, the Kellys weathered and overcame marital unfaithfulness, cancer and the death of their son, Hunter. Even with his physical and mental disabilities though, Hunter still had a profound impact on his family. Jim Kelly recounts the impact that Hunter has had.

Jim Kelly: I mean, he never spoke a word, but he changed so many people's lives and even through our foundation when we have... And automatically I rewind the tape back to when Hunter was diagnosed, when all those people kept coming up to me saying, "Jim, you are a chosen father. Through your son, you will change lives." It took me a while to understand that, but I finally get it and I wish I would've known how it feels and I wish I would've got it a long time ago because right now I'm on a cloud that we are flying and we are now helping people. And I always say this because Hunter, even though he'll never get to run out on a football field and hear 80,000 screaming fans, he's going to do greater things. Without speaking a word, he's going to change the lives of thousands and thousands and thousands of kids.

Roger Marsh: Now, as we start today's broadcast, Jim Kelly walks us through that day when his son Hunter, died. He will also share how Hunter demonstrated how to be Christ-like without ever uttering a word. Let's listen now to this classic program featuring Jim and Jill Kelly and our own Dr. James Dobson right now on Family Talk.

Jim Kelly: It's a tough story and I'll try to get through it. This is one I don't usually say too often, but I probably should and I have been lately because it is really one of the reasons how I ran further away, but really eventually got me to where I'm at now was the day Hunter passed away. Jill and I were with our two daughters at home and grandma and grandpa had, Jill's mom and dad, had Hunter at their house because he loved the water. He loved to swim and they had a swimming pool. So we got a call about five o'clock in the morning and it was Jill's mother saying that they had to rush Hunter to the hospital. And when she was on the phone, the last thing I heard was Children's Hospital. I heard Jill say, "Don't take him to Warsaw Hospital, take him to Children's Hospital."

So automatically Jill gets ready, she leaves, and I had to wait for our neighbor to come to watch our two daughters. So I jump into my truck and I headed to Children's Hospital. So I get to Children's Hospital which is about 25 minutes away, and I'm sitting in the emergency room wondering where our son was, and I went up to the receptionist. I said, "Where is Hunter Kelly at?" And she says, "I don't know what you're talking about." And she goes, "Let me check, Mr. Kelly." So she checked and she come out real quickly and she said, "He's at Warsaw Hospital. They did not bring him here." And I go, "I don't even know where Warsaw Hospital is and don't know where I'm going." So I'm actually jump in my truck, and this is probably 6:30, 7:00 in the morning, something like that. So I'm speeding through the back roads, through the country roads, and there was a car in front of me, but he was speeding pretty good too.

And we're just driving and I finally find out in the vicinity where the hospital was, and I see a police officer go past me the other way, and I looked in my rear-view mirror and I see him turn around. I'm like, "You got to be kidding me. Why now?" So all of a sudden I wind down my windows and the police officer comes up and he sees it's me. And he said, "Oh Jim, I'm glad it's you." He said, "Follow me. We've been hunting for you."

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, goodness.

Jim Kelly: So he jumps in his police car and I follow him. We wind up pulling up to the hospital and as I pull up to the doors, a gentleman come out and said, "Jim, I'll park your car for you." And I go, "No, no, no. That's all right. I'll park it." And he said, "No, Jim, you need to go in now. I'll park your car." So of course I get out and as I walk in through the two glass sliding doors, the doctors were at the doors waiting for me and they said, "We're sorry, Mr. Kelly. Your son passed away five minutes ago." And from that point on, when I got in there, I was able to sit with my son and talk to him by myself for a period of time and really talk to him a way that I never have talked to him before. Apologize to a point where dad wasn't always around with him. Talk to him in a way that I wanted to be there with him.

And then after I get done talking, after Jill and I left the hospital and we're heading home. I really don't even remember if Jill and I even spoke a word on the way back. I just know I was very angry, very mad at God, mad at everybody, just was very hurt. And from that point is where Jill and I really started going different directions. She seek the good Lord. And for me, I went the opposite way until there was a day where I was confronted not only by my mother-in-law, but by myself, knowing that my son is in Heaven now and where do I want to be? I knew how much I loved my son. I knew how much I miss him. I knew if I didn't change my lifestyle, if I didn't become the husband that I was supposed to be, didn't become the father I was supposed to be, I will never get that opportunity to see my son again.

And I also knew that when I came home, I wanted to be able to look my two other daughters in the eye and have them look at their father with respect, knowing that this is a father that we love and we respect. I wanted that. I wanted to love my wife again, and I knew if I did not change my ways, that I would never have that opportunity again. So that was when Jesus intervened and that's when I gave myself up and said, "You know what? I got to confess this to Jill." And me and my pastor went over. We sat down with Jill and I told Jill everything. I told her that I was not a faithful husband, that I'm disgraced over it. I'm mad that I was that way.

But the thing when I told her was, and I never thought that I would be saying these words, is after I spilled the beans and told her everything and told her that I was changing my life and giving my life up to God, I said, "You know what? I feel free." I never know what that word meant. It's funny because every single time that I say this story, chills go through my body. And I'm not just saying that. I don't know why, but it's a feeling that I wish people out there that are non-believers would understand. Here is a football player that I know a lot of my friends saying, "How could this happen to Jim Kelly?" I'm still the same person on the outside. I mean, I still love to have fun. I still hunt. I still like crack jokes. I still do all the things, but I have God in my life now.

Dr. James Dobson: Was there that sense of cleanness?

Jim Kelly: Unbelievable. You know what? I have a lot of friends who are non-believers, and if they would just understand if they would accept the good Lord in their hearts and in their lives and know what it feels like. Yeah, you can describe it, but you can't feel it. You cannot feel it unless it's inside you. And the feeling that I got that day and the feeling that I have right now sitting here, is something I wish everybody could just have a piece of.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, Jim, I gave my heart to the Lord when I was three years old at an altar in a church with a lot of people around me, and I felt the same thing at three years old that you apparently did as a grown man, and it just felt... I don't know what I had done. I don't know what sins I'd committed, but I was aware that I needed Jesus in my heart and I gave him my life and my heart at three years of age and wept like a baby because I was a baby.

Jim Kelly: Yeah, that's good. No pun intended.

Dr. James Dobson: And it was a highlight of my whole life. It is interesting that it can happen to the very young and to those who are older.

Jim Kelly: You can say the very old.

Dr. James Dobson: Okay. Why not just paraphrase that.

Jim Kelly: But it is interesting how our pastor, Pastor Jerry Gillis from The Chapel in Western New York, he said, "You know what? I love to hear Jim because he doesn't talk Christianese." Is that how he says it?

Jill Kelly: Yes.

Jim Kelly: Jill was right there because we're all work in progress. I love to be around my wife and listen to her sometimes. Not all the time, but sometimes, because I learn things. I'm not there yet. We all have a long way to go. I know I have a lot further to go than Jill does, but I enjoy it. I enjoy hearing it now.

Dr. James Dobson: And you're having an opportunity now to share that gospel message, aren't you?

Jim Kelly: Exactly. And it makes me feel good too.

Dr. James Dobson: Is there anything that gives you greater thrill than that, even getting to the Super Bowl?

Jim Kelly: Super Bowl? No, there would be the feeling that I have now and then second right now it wouldn't be the Super Bowl. It would be in hunting.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that right?

Jim Kelly: Yeah, because I know Hunter, my son is right beside me, and every tree stand that I climb up, Hunter is sitting right there beside me.

Dr. James Dobson: Jill, when Jim was telling that story, you had tears running down your cheeks, didn't you?

Jill Kelly: And I'm holding back. I could be a flood of emotion right now, but it is the God who does immeasurably more than all we could ask or imagine. I mean, that is our story and it amazes me, and I can't even articulate it. I try to in our memoir, *Without a Word*, but the overwhelming sense of gratitude that we have that God would use Hunter, this little boy and his suffering to show us what true joy and life and hope is about. And this boy who was suffering all the time, that he was so radiant with the love of Christ and was able to speak volumes without uttering a single word. God was able to use him to change hearts and lives and our family and rescue us in every way. It is so profound to me that God is able, He is so able to use our weaknesses to show us His strength.

Roger Marsh: What a profound concept that God can use even our weaknesses to accomplish His work. You are listening to a conversation Dr. James Dobson had with Jim and Jill Kelly here on Family Talk. As we pick things up once again, Jill Kelly openly shares how God healed and sustained her marriage through her husband Jim's affairs.

Dr. James Dobson: Jill, it was in marriage counseling that you Jim, admitted that you had been unfaithful to Jill.

Jill Kelly: Right, yes.

Dr. James Dobson: How difficult was it for you to forgive him?

Jill Kelly: Well, forgiveness is an interesting thing. I think that forgiveness is a daily thing. When Jim said, and he shared this. When he was sitting there laying it all out there before me because we were actually in a good place because we had been counseling for a while, so we were in a very good place. But little did I know that we actually really were not in a very good place. And when Jim confessed and everything, and then when he said that he felt free, it was as if the Holy Spirit was just like, "Jill, this is real." Because I was skeptical. I mean, I had been down that road before. In fact, Dr. Dobson had counseled me before many years ago. So I knew though, that he could not have expressed that he felt freedom unless Jesus had set him free.

Those who are the sons are the ones who are set free. So I knew, and in those moments I was like, of course I was crushed and I was hurt. And it was like, oh no, here we go again, kind of thing. But I knew that he was in a right place with God. Jim didn't have the power of God in his life to help him before. And now I knew that he had Christ.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you understand intuitively that until this came out, your marriage would always have that unspoken something there that you couldn't get ahold of.

Jill Kelly: Right. And that's the beauty of being able to share where we are again through the memoir, because everything we've ever done has been framed by the media, but we weren't healed. Our marriage had not been healed. And God had not only healed us and rescued our family, but he had also rescued our marriage.

Dr. James Dobson: Jim, you said something a few minutes ago that you said very quickly, but I heard it. That your mother-in-law really took you to task and confronted you. Did I get that right?

Jim Kelly: Yeah. Yeah, she did. And she knew that if I didn't seek the Lord that I was on a slow path to not being married period. And not being able to see my daughters and everything in a way that I would. And I think that's when I really started to realize that she's right and that I knew the ultimate was, I wanted to see my son again. And I know my two daughters, how much I love them and how much I cared for my wife. And until I really got a good grasp of it and really understood and understood where I wanted to be, I wasn't going to be led down the path that I needed to go down.

Dr. James Dobson: You say in the book that either your mother-in-law or father-in-law, I am not sure which, said to you, "How would you feel if somebody treated your daughter the way you're treating my daughter?"

Jim Kelly: No, it was my father-in-law. And what he said was, "What if somebody would do this to your daughter, Camryn, how would you feel?" And that in itself made me realize it. I mean, there's a whole thing that goes, the feelings that go through your body, but if you are a father of daughters, I think everybody understands that nobody would ever want something to happen to their kids or want them to feel hurt in any way, whether it's physical or mental because you love your kids. I mean you love them with every ounce of energy you have in your body. And when my father-in-law said that, it really hit home.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Well, Jim, it takes a whole lot of courage to come on national radio and admit what you've admitted and I applaud you for doing it. And God has forgiven you, hasn't He?

Jim Kelly: Yes, He has. And the thing is, I understand that none of us are perfect, but I knew where I wanted to be and I know now what it feels like to be there and hallelujah. Amen.

Dr. James Dobson: Hallelujah.

Jim Kelly: I know how I felt when I was an unbeliever. I know how I felt when I used to hear people talk about it. It turned me off to begin with. It really did. But I just

want those people out there to really to seek after God. Go. I guess for us, it's a blessing. We have a great pastor. We have a great pastor in Jerry Gillis who makes you understand, makes you feel good about going to church each and every week. You leave with something in your heart that when you walk out your heart just... and you glow, you really do. You glow after. And that's something I never had before. And just those people out there that are the non-believers, I mean, try it. It feels good. I'm not speaking the Christianese, sorry.

Dr. James Dobson: Jim and Jill, this book really reveals who you all are, some of the ugly moments, some of the sublime moments, but now it's out there and a lot of people are going to know about your private life. How have you dealt with your daughters about this?

Jim Kelly: Well, me for instance, I knew after I spoke with Jill about everything, and then of course, after the book was going to be released, I knew I had to sit down with my daughter, especially my oldest daughter, Erin, who is 15 years old. I knew I had to sit down with her and tell her about the book, tell her about Daddy, tell her that there was things in this book that I'm not proud of, but there's things in this book that I wanted to let her know about before she reads it, because I love my daughters more than anything in the world. My two girls mean so much to me, and I thought by coming from Daddy's mouth meant more to her than reading something that's in a book. I sat down with her, I explained it to her. She stood up. She gave me a big hug. She said, Daddy, I understand and I forgive you, and I love you more today than I loved you yesterday.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh my goodness.

Jim Kelly: And when you hear that from your daughter, it brought tears to my eyes because our daughter is very bright. She does get it. She understands. She's a woman of faith. That was like the old saying, take a piano off your back. That was one thing that I knew I had to say to my daughter, but more importantly, that I wanted to say to her. And the way she reacted, I am so proud of her and I love her so much.

Dr. James Dobson: Jill, did you hear that conversation?

Jill Kelly: I was not there, and I did not know that he was going to have that conversation.

Dr. James Dobson: How'd you react when you heard it?

Jill Kelly: I was speechless. I was in awe that Jim would choose to sit down with Erin and share that with her knowing, of course, yes, that she was going to read the book, so he did want to share that with her. But that's huge for us as parents to humble ourselves and admit that we're not perfect. Mommy and Daddy have made mistakes and to ask for her forgiveness. I am still, and I'm so thankful that Jim will share that because it's not in the book. It has happened as a result, which is huge for our family, for Erin to know that Daddy loves her and that he's

sorry for how everything happened with Mommy and Daddy, but that we're not perfect and that he loves her enough to tell her he's sorry.

Dr. James Dobson: And that Jesus has forgiven.

Jill Kelly: Amen.

Jim Kelly: Amen.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you've told a lot of people today, and I thank you for it. And the name of the book is, *Without a Word*. I want everybody to remember this. This is a book that will bring people to Christ. That's what you have in mind, isn't it, Jill?

Jill Kelly: Yes, and that was part of my heart's cry is that I was hoping absolutely to encourage believers through our story, but more than that, I wanted the non-believer, maybe the football fan, maybe the parent having a special needs child, to pick up the book and know that God is real, that He rescues the broken and that He makes our ashes beautiful, because I think that that is the story that is in that book.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, the rest of the title is *Without a Word: How a Boy's Unspoken Love Changed Everything* by Jill Kelly. I can tell you, you've not only blessed a lot of people who are listening to us today, but you've blessed us in the studio and those that are in the control room. I thank you for that and God be with you as you fly home and stay in touch with us, will you?

Jim Kelly: I appreciate it.

Jill Kelly: Thank you.

Jim Kelly: It's an honor.

Dr. James Dobson: I want this book to sell a million copies. Let's say it here and now. This is my goal for this book. Thank you guys for being with us.

Jill Kelly: Thank you.

Roger Marsh: Well, hopefully today's program touched your heart and gave you some hope for any tough situation you might be dealing with. You've been listening to Jim and Jill Kelly with our own Dr. James Dobson today here on Family Talk. If you'd like to learn more about their ministry, Hunter's Hope or Jill Kelly's book entitled *Without a Word: How a Boy's Unspoken Love Changed Everything*, just visit our website at [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). That's [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). When you're there, you can easily share this two-day program with a friend or a family member.



Now, while you're on our website, be sure you also check out other programs featuring Dr. Dobson and a wide variety of guests and experts discussing a wide range of topics ranging from parenting, child-rearing, and issues that the church is facing today. Now, before we leave the air for of the week, I want to remind you once again that our 2023 Broadcast Collection is available either as a 5-disc CD collection or a digital download, and we'll be happy to send you a copy as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute today.

Now, some of the esteemed guests that you'll hear in this collection include Dr. Del Tackett, Lieutenant General Jerry Boykin, Charlie Kirk, and more. To reserve your copy, simply go online to [drjamesdobson.org/2023](http://drjamesdobson.org/2023), and everything you need will be right there on that page. Again, that's [drjamesdobson.org/2023](http://drjamesdobson.org/2023). And thank you so much for your prayers and faithful and ongoing financial support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. We would not be where we are today here on the air without your financial support as well as your prayers.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Till then, have a restful, blessed, and relaxing weekend.

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

Dr. James Dobson: Love, even genuine love is a fragile thing, like a plant, it must be watered and cultivated or it will wither and die.

Roger Marsh: Dr. James Dobson for Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, some newly married couples have the misguided notion that their love will continue to grow naturally through the years, but the truth is, love must be maintained and protected if it's going to survive. Love can perish when a husband works seven days a week or when spouses don't make the effort to communicate regularly. The keen edge of a loving relationship may be dulled through the routine pressures of living, as I experienced during the early days of my own marriage. I was working full-time and trying to finish my doctorate at USC. My wife was teaching school and running our small home. I remember clearly the evening I realized what this busy life was doing to our relationship. We still loved each other, but it had been too long since we'd felt a spirit of warmth and closeness.

My textbooks were pushed aside that night and we went for a long walk. The following semester, I took fewer classes and postponed my academic goals to help preserve what I valued more highly. Where does your marriage rank on your hierarchy of values? Does it get the leftovers and scraps from your busy schedule, or is it something of great worth to be supported and replenished? Let there be no misunderstanding, if left unattended, your relationship could die a slow death and no career goal is worth that price.

Roger Marsh:

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