



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: A Journey of Widowhood and Grief- Part 1

Guest(s): Joyce Rogers

Air Date: June 28, 2021

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Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener-supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

Roger Marsh: Hello and welcome to this Monday edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. We're so glad you've joined us. I'm Roger Marsh and, of course, Family Talk is the listener-supported broadcast division of The Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

Every year, about 700,000 women join a sorority that none of them really wants to be a part of. They become widows. These women join millions of others who have experienced the anguish of losing their life partner, and our guest today is no stranger to that grief. In 2005, Joyce Rogers lost her beloved husband Adrian Rogers, renowned Baptist minister and founder of Love Worth Finding Ministries. Adrian was 74 when he passed away from complications from cancer treatments. He and Joyce had been married 54 years. Today, Joyce Rogers will be sharing with Dr. Dobson about her journey through widowhood and God's faithfulness into that new season.

Joyce Rogers is the author of numerous books including *Therefore I Hope in Him* and *Grace for The Widow*. Joyce and Adrian have five grown children and several grandchildren and many great-grandchildren as well. Now, when this conversation was recorded, there were some audience members in the studio, so you might hear some background noise. Here now is Dr. James Dobson with Joyce Rogers here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: We're going to reach out to those who have lost a spouse, particularly widows. You know, there are millions of women in this country who have had to say goodbye to a husband who has now passed on. And, in fact, it's my understanding that about 80% of all married women will eventually be widows, so it's something to talk about. It's important to discuss it, not only after it occurs, but as much as possible. I'm not sure it really is, but as much as possible to help people get ready for that inevitability that is going to occur. It's one of the most cruel aspects of living. I mean, the Lord is not cruel, but this is one that feels that way because you're bonded with somebody for all those years. You

know, in some cases, as in our guest today, 54 years, and then to have to say goodbye and carry on alone, that's tough.

And so, we want to stretch out a loving arm today to those who are grieving and we've invited our dear friend, speaking of Shirley and me, who's sitting over next to the wall today. Mrs. Joyce Rogers is going to be our guest today and Joyce, we absolutely love you. Do you know that?

Joyce Rogers: Well, and I love you. It's so good to be here just to see you and Shirley.

Dr. James Dobson: And, we loved your husband, Dr. Adrian Rogers.

Joyce Rogers: And, all these other wonderful people. He loved you.

Dr. James Dobson: He was like a brother to me. Literally like a brother. And, I spoke at his funeral and I thank you for giving me the opportunity to do that. I was thinking this afternoon where I really became aware of Adrian. I had known him. I had met him. But my wife, Shirley, is chairman of the National Day of Prayer and it was very early in her 21-year term and she invited a very famous minister to come and be the keynote speaker for the National Day of Prayer in the Cannon House Office Building in Washington, D.C. And, he wouldn't give her an answer, but let her think he was coming and at the very last minute, I mean right at the time that the event was going to occur, he turned her down. He called and said, "I can't come."

And, Shirley didn't know Adrian very well, but she called him and said, "Dr. Rogers, you know, I've got a real problem here. I need a keynote speaker. Would you be willing to do this?". And, he packed up and came and he was our buddy from that time on because he showed that he had such a heart for ministry. He went on to become a member of my board of directors at Focus on the Family and I depended on him so much. He had such wisdom and such a commitment to the Lord. You were one blessed lady to have been married to him and he was to be married to you.

Joyce Rogers: Let me just make a brief comment here about... I well remember when I think my heart... Well, I knew of you, read your books and so forth. But when you preached at the National Religious Broadcasters meeting on abortion...

Dr. James Dobson: Oh.

Joyce Rogers: And, you bore your soul and I'm sure that you all remember that.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh.

Joyce Rogers: I mean, I thought, "This man. This man believes this." And, really, it was from that time on that my heart was bonded to you and to Shirley and indeed, we both loved you so much.

Dr. James Dobson: You and your husband were the pastors. He was the pastor. You were the pastor's wife at Bellevue Baptist Church for 32 years.

Joyce Rogers: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: When you think back of those years, what memories flood through?

Joyce Rogers: Well, that's a big question. But, I mean, they were wonderful years. Actually, I had made a comment several times before in my life, before we came there, that I never wanted to go to a big church. And, God brought me through a little stretching time at the church before that and I'm so glad He did. Got that over with before I came to this church.

Dr. James Dobson: You had about 30,000 members, didn't you?

Joyce Rogers: And, I called it God's joke on me because it grew into what I lovingly called a monster church. But I remember when we went there, it was a large church but it wasn't that large and I remember walking down the big hallways and saying to Adrian when I got home that these older ladies would come and pat me on the shoulder and just tell me how much they love me. And, when I came home I said to Adrian, "How can they love me? They don't even know me." And, I concluded afterwards that they had loved me by faith and that I loved them back by faith. And, it was a 32 year love affair.

Dr. James Dobson: There in Memphis. We had the opportunity to come there. I spoke there on one occasion. And, from those sermons all those years has come the ministry of Love Worth Finding.

Joyce Rogers: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: It's still on television today.

Joyce Rogers: And radio.

Dr. James Dobson: And, he's been gone since 2005.

Joyce Rogers: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: And yet, that ministry continues and Shirley and I listen almost every week. I mean, it's just amazing how relevant those messages are to today.

Joyce Rogers: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: And, that choir. My goodness. That choir. How many...? You sing in the choir.

Joyce Rogers: I do.

Dr. James Dobson: How many people were in the choir at its maximum?

Joyce Rogers: Well, at its maximum, it could be several hundred. We had two different services, so we didn't have that many all the time. But if there was a big joint thing... I guess would be maybe 150 in each service.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Joyce Rogers: But it was marvelous and our marvelous minister of music with us so many years, Jim Whitmire.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, yes.

Joyce Rogers: Came from Florida from the church we were there. The First Baptist Church of Merritt Island, Florida. And then, was with us all these many years, and he was a wonderful part of that program and that wonderful music.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, what we're here to talk about today is the loss of your husband, Adrian Rogers, in 2005. And, you really didn't have a lot of time to prepare for that, did you? He retired and then you discovered that he had cancer.

Joyce Rogers: Right. He had, couple years before then, had a minor heart attack and he had a genetic heart arrhythmia problem and his daddy had had the same thing and he had recovered and lived to be 92 and I think Adrian had recovered from that and... But then, right after he retired, he found out that he had colon cancer and we never dreamed that he would die and even when he went into the hospital with pneumonia, I knew God was able to heal him. I didn't hide my head in the sand about it, but God didn't choose to do that. But God took him. In fact, I've wondered sometimes. I remember I was off at a speaking engagement one time and before the service, I remember I was just standing around waiting for the service to begin and I looked up and said to God, "Why did you take him and I'm here?". I mean, he is so needed, you know? And, I think, well, you did and I'm here and so, Lord, what do you have me to do?

Dr. James Dobson: We have often talked to the television set after one of his wonderful messages and said, "Adrian, where are you? We need you today."

Joyce Rogers: Well, I've thought the same thing. He... I thought of him as a man of great courage and conviction. I've known him since we've been children. When we were in the sixth grade, he dropped love notes by my desk that I still have.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that right?

Joyce Rogers: They must have impressed me.

Dr. James Dobson: He was a fast worker there.

Joyce Rogers: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: You were married when you were 18 weren't you?

Joyce Rogers: Right. I can't believe that now, either. Became a pastor's wife when I was 18. But... And, I look back and think I cannot believe that. But I loved being a pastor's wife. I actually became a pastor's wife when we were still in college and he had a little country church and never forget that wonderful little church and I loved being a pastor's wife, loved being his wife. And, he loved the word of God and he had such conviction and I think of him as a man of really conviction, courage and a man of compassion because sometimes if you have a lot of conviction, necessarily, and courage, it doesn't necessarily come over in a nice way.

But I believe that, indeed, he had, and I believe that God worked on our lives through the years and used circumstances in our lives to bring us to that place.

Dr. James Dobson: You were standing there, I think, the morning in a church service that he announced that God was calling him to preach.

Joyce Rogers: Well, that was at our Southern Baptist retreat center in Ridgecrest, North Carolina, and our pastor and his wife had taken a group of people from the church and I was standing by his side that evening when he stepped out.

Dr. James Dobson: Were you married?

Joyce Rogers: No. He was just 16 and I was 15.

Dr. James Dobson: So, you knew you were marrying a preacher, didn't you?

Joyce Rogers: I did. I'll never forget that evening because I remember thinking there was no one in the whole world any happier than I was. And, he still remembered that I squeezed his hand after that. But we were too young to make any declaration of love. But really, I think back and deep in my heart, I knew back then that one day I would be Mrs. Adrian Rogers, pastor's wife.

Dr. James Dobson: In fact, I read that you said you were deeply honored to carry his name.

Joyce Rogers: Indeed. And, I don't like this new philosophy of not being known by your husband's name. I am proud...

Dr. James Dobson: You were not insulted by that at all.

Joyce Rogers: Still to be the wife of Adrian Rogers.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you have written a book now, which is what we're here to talk about. It's called *Grace for The Widow: A Journey Through the Fog of Loss* by Joyce Rogers. Describe the fog of loss.

Joyce Rogers: Well, I think what I meant by that... I can remember in those early days after Adrian died. Well, I had been good at multitasking, but it seemed like that it was just one thing that I could concentrate on at a time and I can still remember saying to the Lord, "Lord, if I only had somebody to tell me what to do next." And, then it dawned on me.

Dr. James Dobson: You mean after Adrian died?

Joyce Rogers: Yes. Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Yes.

Joyce Rogers: And then, it was just like one thing at a time instead of being Joyce that was good at multitasking. You know? And, I remember it seemed like the Lord spoke inwardly to me. "Well, you know I gave you my Holy Spirit."

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Joyce Rogers: But... And, indeed, he did, but in a very practical way, I began to realize that he would send people to do practical things for me. In fact, I had a neighbor who knew me and he would tell me, "There's shingles loose on your roof. I see them from across the street." And... And, I feel like that the Holy Spirit directed these people to my life.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Joyce Rogers: But yet, that God did give me direction. And then, it got easier as the days went on. But at first, it seemed like that I was in kind of a fog and not being able to think as clearly as I used to be able to.

Dr. James Dobson: Grief will do that to you.

Joyce Rogers: And, it will, and I don't know what day it was when I realized one day that he had brought me through the fog.

Dr. James Dobson: You know that my mother never did learn to cope with the loss of my father and I think one of the things that bothered her most is that she lost her entire identity when he died because she was so identified with him and his ministry and with what he loved and what he read and what he did. And, she was, you know, his help mate. That's who she was. And, she said when he died, it all changed. "I was no longer Mrs. James Dobson. I was Myrtle Dobson. I didn't want to be Myrtle Dobson. I wanted to be Mrs. James Dobson." And, she said his driver's license was cut up and gone. He did not exist anymore and the thing

that she was so identified with was suddenly gone. He was in heaven. So, I don't know if you've felt that way and...

Joyce Rogers: Well, I can indeed understand where she was coming from because, like, say I knew Adrian forever and all I ever wanted to be was his wife and then...

Dr. James Dobson: Even early on, before you were married?

Joyce Rogers: Yes. I was just, you know, very young when we went together and so forth, you know? Really before we started dating, we were sitting in church together.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that right?

Joyce Rogers: By the time we were old enough to date, we thought we were in love. We lived just a couple of blocks from each other, a block from the Baptist church, and so he'd walk me home from school.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Joyce Rogers: Walk me home from church. But anyway, I do understand that to some degree because from my earliest days, I mean, that's who I wanted to be. I wanted to be his wife. And then, I wanted to be a pastor's wife, but it wasn't any pastor.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Joyce Rogers: It was to be his wife because he was going to be a pastor. But I still felt a great calling to be a pastor's wife. I loved being a pastor's wife. Let me tell you a little experience I had. I can't remember exactly how long... It wasn't too long after Adrian died, but Vonette Bright, whose husband Bill, of course with Campus Crusade for Christ, had gone to be with the Lord. And, I'm sure you remember because you and Adrian were part of that service.

Dr. James Dobson: Absolutely. I spoke at his funeral.

Joyce Rogers: Yeah. Yeah. Both of you did. And, she called me and she wanted to know whether I would go with her to Korea to a women's prayer conference. Now, that was out of my comfort zone.

Dr. James Dobson: Mm-hmm.

Joyce Rogers: Now, I had gone a lot of places with Adrian overseas. Never dreamed we'd go anywhere, but I was privileged to travel with him to many places and to be with him was to be comfortable because he always seemed to have the right thing to say and so forth, and so I was not intimidated to be with him. But the thought of going out of the country without him, I did not want to do it and I just said no. And, she asked me to reconsider and I said, "Well, since I don't have a husband

to consult, let me ask all of my children." And, when I did, every one of them encouraged me to do it and I was somewhat amazed about that, you know?

But anyway, that morning in my quiet time, I had been reading from one of my favorite passages in the Bible, in Isaiah 43. I know you're familiar with it. It's probably one of your favorite passages too, when it says, "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. Through the rivers they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned." Anyway, I had been reading that over again and after I got through telling her I would pray about it, ask my children about it, I went back and I just happened to no... It was... My Bible was still open and I just happened... Actually, there's no just happened. But my eyes fell on a verse.

Now, I had read it before, but it's like I'd never read it before. This verse of Scripture was the 19th verse. I had not read it that morning and this is what the 19th verse says. "Behold, I will do a new thing. Now it shall spring forth. Shall you not know it, I will even make a road in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." And, I can remember it was like a burning sensation. I am not given to experiences, whatever. I am just not. Some people are, but I'm not. But it was like just a burning sensation in my heart and I remember saying out loud... No one else was around. "Lord, is this for me?"

And, I thought at the time that He was telling me that He wanted me to do that, to step out of my comfort zone and go to Korea.

Dr. James Dobson: And, that He was going to go with you.

Joyce Rogers: That He was going to go with me. And so, I asked the Lord, "What was that all about?" You know? And, I became convinced that God did speak to me out of that passage and that He was trying to tell me that He had a plan for me and that He was not finished with me yet. And, not necessarily to go to that trip to Korea, but that He wasn't finished with me yet. I mean, God speaks to me out of his Word but that was an extra special Word.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Yeah. At a time when you needed it.

Joyce Rogers: Right. You know? That I felt like that God did have a purpose for me. But some of it's a day at a time, and I know your mama was a great woman of the Word also, but some of it has been claiming promises along the way and just going as one step at a time.

Dr. James Dobson: Joyce, you are the mother of five children. Steve, Gail, Phillip, David and Janice. And, you lost Baby Phillip in a crib death.

Joyce Rogers: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: At two and a half months of age.

Joyce Rogers: Yes. Right.

Dr. James Dobson: That had to be terribly difficult.

Joyce Rogers: Well, it was a very interesting thing. We had just been at a new church at Fort Pierce, Florida. Parkview Baptist Church, just several weeks. And, it was on Mother's Day.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, my goodness.

Joyce Rogers: And, we had just gotten through eating lunch and my two oldest children at the time... Steve was four. Gail was two and a half. Little Phillip was two and a half months. And, I was getting ready to just go take a nap and the other children were asleep and as mothers all do, I was just going to go by and look in at the crib and he looked so strange and I remember calling for Adrian to come quickly and I remember asking him, "Is he dead?". And, Adrian picked his body up, tucked him in his coat. He still had his coat on from Sunday. And, he said, "You stay here." Because the other children were in the other room. And, he drove as fast as he could to the hospital.

And, I will never forget while I was gone. It seemed like an eternity and yet it seemed like just a few minutes. But also, a testimony for what the Word of God... To hide the Word of God in your heart as a little child, as an older child, as an adult or wherever you are, because I can still visualize myself standing in the living room, crying out to God the 23rd Psalm.

And, I write in my book about the 23rd Psalm because I went through a renewal, I called it, of the 23rd Psalm, where for probably two or three years, I prayed it several times a day for several years and I still do pray it and personalize it. But I remember discovering for the first time what that verse meant about, "Ye though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death."

Dr. James Dobson: Well, let me introduce your book again. This is *Grace for The Widow: A Journey Through the Fog of Loss* by Joyce Rogers. And, that 23rd Psalm or your rendition of it is in this book. Would you share it with us?

Joyce Rogers: Okay. Now, that... You know, the 23rd Psalm, I believe, is something... It probably is the favorite passage of Scripture in all the Bible.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Joyce Rogers: But, I mean, it's for the child, it's for the adult, it's for everybody. I wrote a kind of a special little rendition of it.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Joyce Rogers: And, it really... I call it my 23rd Psalm. This is what it said. The Lord is my bridegroom and my husband. I shall not lack love and companionship. He gives me understanding of His ways and He understands all my needs and desires. He longs to spend time to fellowship with me. He leads me into quiet times with Him alone. Yes, though I'm surrounded by rejection and loneliness, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. I know that you love me, for I feel your presence and I hear your voice. You love me so much that you laid down your life for me. You provide for every need I have and you protect me from those who would do me harm. Surely, your goodness and loving kindness will be evident every day I live and I shall be united with my heavenly bridegroom and husband forever.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, Joyce, there are many people listening to us who have been through and experienced this loss and they're still looking for answers. They're still grieving. Some of them, like my mother for 11 years continued to grieve. And, your book offers direction and hope. Some of the things that you say in the book are what you call profound, depending on the word and so on, depending on the Lord directly. But others are practical.

Joyce Rogers: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: In terms of how you start to put your life back together again. And, I want you to be with us again and get into some of that advice that you have offered. Can you be with us again?

Joyce Rogers: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: You better. Adrian would want you to do this. It's been a pleasure having you here.

Joyce Rogers: It's been a joy.

Dr. James Dobson: And, Shirley and I do love you and have prayed for you often and will continue to do so. So, let's meet again 24 hours from now.

Joyce Rogers: Thank you.

Roger Marsh: Well, I don't know about you, but I am looking forward to hearing the conclusion of Dr. Dobson's conversation with Joyce Rogers tomorrow, right here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Psalm 34, Verse 18 says, "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and He saves those who are crushed in spirit." What an encouraging reminder that when we are at our lowest, God is right there with us. He understands our deepest sorrows. He is the one who will one day wipe away all of our tears. If you're in a time of mourning or grief right now, please don't hesitate to give us a call. We'd love to talk with you, to pray with you, maybe even recommend a resource that could be an encouragement to you. Our number here at Family Talk is 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825.

Now, to learn more about Joyce Rogers, her ministry and her books, including *Grace for The Widow: A Journey Through the Fog of Loss*, visit our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. Her book really is a great resource and could be an encouragement to you or to someone you know who recently has become a widow. Again, that web address is drjamesdobson.org/broadcast.

Finally, this entire month of June here at the JDFI, we've been focusing on strengthening fathers. Dr. Dobson has dedicated his life's work to encouraging and equipping the family because he truly believes that it is the bedrock of every good society and dads, you play an essential role in your family. Do not take that responsibility lightly. You can find great resources for dads, like Dr. Dobson's bestselling book *Straight Talk to Men*, also our Celebrating Dads CD, our Strong Dads devotional series and much, much more when you go to drjamesdobson.org.

Be sure to join us again tomorrow for the conclusion of this two-part broadcast entitled "A Journey of Widowhood and Grief," right here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks for listening.

Announcer:

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