



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Equipping Parents for the Culture War

Guest(s): Rebecca Hagelin

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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.

Rebecca Hagelin: One of the greatest tools of the opposition and having parents not have their voices be heard, is to call us overprotective or call us names because parents recoil to that. It's like using the term racist or sexist. And so the term overprotection is the new buzzword, and what I say to those Hollywood types is, "Protective? You bet I'm protective. I'm the mama. It's my job to protect my kids."

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. And be sure to be listening at the end of the program today. We'll have a special announcement about how you can stand with us financially and take advantage of our special \$300,000 May matching grant. Now on today's program, you're going to hear an insightful conversation Dr. Dobson had with author and columnist Rebecca Hagelin. They'll be discussing the topic of preparing parents to fight the culture war for their kids. Rebecca is president and CEO of Rebecca Hagelin Communications and Marketing. She's the author of three books and previously served as vice president of communications and marketing for the Heritage Foundation. Now, today's program touches on some very sensitive topics and it may not be suitable for younger listeners so parental discretion is advised. Here now is Dr. James Dobson's classic conversation with Rebecca Hagelin right here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, Rebecca, let me start with this. You have a lot of statistics and a lot of research in your book that just caused the hair to stand up on the back of my neck. Let me read some of them. Just with regard to the internet, there are 4.2 million pornography websites, more than any other topic or area on the internet. It's almost impossible for kids not to stumble onto them. You said last time that 90% of children between 8 and 16 find themselves unwittingly looking at pornography. Where'd you find that statistic?

Rebecca Hagelin: That study was done by the London School of Economics and to just show how this hits home so close. I just did a lecture on my book and I had a mom come

up to me afterwards that I've known for some 20 years who's been in the public policy battle, been fighting right there with me, and she said, "I feel real convicted because my husband and I have been having trouble with our computer and it keeps breaking down and so we haven't bothered to put a filter on it." And the other night, my 8-year-old daughter woke up at midnight crying and when I asked her what's wrong, she said, "Mommy, I did something very bad." "Well, what did you do, honey?" She said, "I typed your name in" because she knew that her mother had a website, but she got the name wrong. She put in .com instead of .org and her mom's first name, and up popped one of the most vile internet sites.

And the little girl said, "And Mommy, I saw really bad stuff." And her mom said, "Well, honey, I'm sorry. You did it by accident." She said, "But I stayed and I looked at it." And this little...

Dr. James Dobson: She'll never get that out of her head.

Rebecca Hagelin: She'll never forget that, the 8-year-old girl, because mom and dad didn't understand that once you shatter a child's innocence, you've shattered the world forever. And the simple act of putting a filter on the internet could have prevented that. It's so sad because they're involved in their church and public policy. They're good people. I love them. They're some of my dearest friends. But this is the mistake that many moms and dads listening are making. We are forgetting that we have to be eternally vigilant even in our own homes.

Dr. James Dobson: Um-hum. You just think of how different it was when I was a child. Parents didn't have to worry about this.

Rebecca Hagelin: Not at all.

Dr. James Dobson: You have statistics in this book in regard to television. This one blew me away. 81% of children between 2 and 7 watch television without their parents.

Rebecca Hagelin: Right. And a more recent survey than that says that the vast majority of children of all ages, who most of them are watching TV in their bedrooms behind closed doors, their parents don't know what they're watching. They have no rules as to what they're watching. And the children are questioning that. The children are wondering.

Dr. James Dobson: They know what's wrong.

Rebecca Hagelin: They know what's wrong, but if mom and dad aren't there to stop them... See, what parents have to realize is when you as a mom or dad are silent about the culture or about what your children are listening and watching, that is an implied endorsement to the child's developing mind. The child knows it's wrong instinctively. That 8-year-old girl knew it was wrong, but it was coming into the house. Somehow it was okay that it came into the house, but if mom and dad

don't stand up and say it's wrong, that child begins to lose their sensitivity to what's right and what's wrong.

Dr. James Dobson: What is your answer, Rebecca, to the Hollywood crowd that says, "If you don't like what we're putting on television, change the channel."

Rebecca Hagelin: Change it to what? Even if you throw the TV out, get rid of your internet and ban ice cream stops because you're afraid of the pornography and the gas station stores and don't go to the mall.

Dr. James Dobson: Don't go to the movies.

Rebecca Hagelin: Or don't go to the movie, your children are hardly safe. I had six children in the big Hagelin family van heading down Highway 95 toward Florida. And as soon as we got to North Carolina, there were huge billboards, "Topless, We dare, We bare," advertising these trashy little topless bars that have popped up all across the country and you can't even drive down the highway without being assaulted. And so we pulled in a little while down the road to stop and get a break at a gas station. Attached to this gas station was one of those ice cream stands where I could get some of my yummy Rocky Road ice cream.

And we were standing there paying for our ice cream cones and there was a product right at eye level called Horneous Goatweed, sex stimulant pills for men and women. So I scurried my then 11-year-old daughter and her friend way over and said, "Go stand over there while I finish paying", only to turn around and see they were standing by the magazine rack which was filled with porn and some seedy guy reading a porn magazine. Grab the kids, jump back in the van, drive down the road. The assault continues with the topless bars. We pull in a Burger King later on that night. There's a television in the corner playing a made-for-TV movie. The adults start taking their clothes off. Everywhere we go, from the grocery store checkout stands where the trashy women's magazines are, to even our kids' textbooks, our values are under assault. And I think you're right, Dr. Dobson. I think good moms and dads are getting sick and tired of it. So it's up to mom and dad to every single day commit to the battle. See, I have three teenagers and it is a daily battle.

Dr. James Dobson: What do you say to the Hollywood moguls and people like that who say, "So what do you want to do Rebecca? You want to make a cloister out of your home? You want to protect them from every cultural influence? You're going to make them weird?" You've heard that argument.

Rebecca Hagelin: Oh, you hear it all the time. I mean, one of the greatest tools of the opposition and having parents not have their voices be heard, is to call us overprotective or call us names. Because parents recoil to that. It's like using the term racist or sexist. When you're talking about abortion, if a man talks about abortion, the way women shut him down is by saying, "You're a sexist." And so that term overprotection is the new buzzword. And what I say to those Hollywood types

is, "Protective? You bet I'm protective. I'm the mama. It's my job to protect my kids."

Dr. James Dobson: You're not embarrassed about that.

Rebecca Hagelin: I am not embarrassed about it. As a matter of fact, that's my role, that's my God-given role because I know that if I don't question the material, if I don't teach my children how to make good character judgments, if I don't build in them a moral compass, there's nobody that's going to do it.

Dr. James Dobson: You have found yourself going to the schools and questioning what they were teaching and what they were doing and so on. How do you deal with the intimidation that sometimes occurs when they say, "What are you, an extremist, some kind of right-wing fundamentalist?" They've got all kinds of names that they call you. Do you recoil from that? Does it sting you? Do you go home and cry? What do you do?

Rebecca Hagelin: I have to admit that the times that I've had to pick up the phone and call a teacher about what's been going on in school, my heart beats a little faster before I pick up the phone. It's a little nerve-wracking, but then I just remind myself, this is my job. This is what God has called me to do. And one great example of that is when my son entered the ninth grade in public school, we received a letter from the county inviting all the parents of the high school with thousands and thousands of children, to come see the sex ed curriculum. So my husband and I showed up expecting to see a large auditorium filled with parents. We were two of seven parents who even bothered to show up and see the sex ed curriculum.

Dr. James Dobson: What's going on there? I simply don't understand that.

Rebecca Hagelin: This is, and I'm actually losing my point a bit, but it's important to say this. Over the past several years when I've received all this email from parents saying they feel helpless, they feel there's an onslaught of the culture. I took these thousands of emails and I divided them pretty much into three stacks of why parents aren't involved. One is they do feel tired. They feel that there's this onslaught that they can't handle and they're overwhelmed. And what I say is, "The mass marketers are never too tired to go after your children, so you have to be vigilant."

The second category I put parents into is that they're really just disconnected. They're too busy with their own lives and their careers and their homes and they want to have the beautiful gardens. They've never stopped to see the pressures that are being put on their children. And they really don't understand that if we would relieve our children of some of this pressure by standing in the gap, the children will be grateful.

And then the third category of why a lot of parents aren't engaged is because many parents today were raised in the hippie generation and they never learned to deal with peer pressure themselves. So my goodness, mom and dad, if you've never learned to stand up to peer pressure, how can you teach your children to do that?

Dr. James Dobson: Rebecca, I think there's a fourth one. Consider this. I think a lot of parents do not get involved in defending their kids at school and in the culture because they don't want to embarrass their children. Their children say, "Mom, do not come to school. I don't want you on that campus." Right?

Rebecca Hagelin: Yeah, that's true. And where I was originally going with the thought is we went and we saw the sex ed curriculum. Again, my husband and I, two of seven parents who bothered to show up. Of course, it contained graphic depictions of sex. It was full of moral relativism and it was not what we want our child to study. So we opted him out. The only child in the whole high school that was opted out that year was Drew Hagelin. And let me tell you, he was not happy about it. But I sat him down, my husband and I did, and we said, "Drew, we are your parents. I, as your mother, feel this great mantle of responsibility to raise you according to how I feel God has told me to raise you because I'm the one that's going to have to be accountable. Now we're going to make it as easy for you as is absolutely possible."

So we opted him out and he went to the library every day and did an alternative assignment. Well, it wasn't until the end of the semester that he told me he had to go every day in front of his peers to get a pass to the library. Well, I was fighting mad when I heard that. So when the next semester rolled around, I called the school and I talked to that administrator and I said, "It is absolutely immoral to humiliate a child by making him come in front of his peers to get a pass to the library every day. This is a good kid. You know that he's an honor student, that he's got strong character and has never given you any problems in the whole weeks that he's been at this school."

And the administrator said, "You know, you're right. I never thought about it from the child's perspective." And so we changed the rule for the whole school, where you find the teacher at lunch, they give you a week's worth of passes for the entire week. I had to ask. I had to have the guts to call the administrator and ask.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, when the shoe's on the other foot, they do understand. Many schools don't want anything having to do with the Christmas celebrations because there may be a Jewish child or a Muslim child there. And so they say, "We can't do this because it would be upsetting to one or two to the minority." But when that minority is a conservative Christian or the child of a conservative Christian family, then they don't understand it and it didn't ever occur to them.

Rebecca Hagelin: It never occurred to them, and it never occurred to them that the alternative assignment that they gave my son wasn't something that I wouldn't like. The

alternative assignment was to every week... On Tuesday the Washington Post has a health section and the assignment was for the child to read the health section, pull five articles out, and every Monday for the previous week, you turn in five typed pages on five different health articles. So I called the school and I said, "I don't exactly believe the Washington Post. I don't know that their health information is accurate. How about we find other health magazines that I put a lot faith in and he writes about those?" And they said, "Okay, just attach the articles."

So we spent our fun semester going through Heritage Foundation studies on how abstinence education is more effective than regular sex education and how teaching kids about contraceptives doesn't work in helping to reduce their sexual activity. And we did all of these studies and my son ended up getting an A actually for the semester.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, this is kind of a testimonial to a school where at least they would listen to you. And there are many schools out there that will.

Rebecca Hagelin: It's all about loving your children and keeping the vision in your mind about the type of adult you want that child to become. And hey, I believe there should be a protected space of innocence for children and moms and dads need to make sure that happens. Dr. Dobson, you've written about this many times, how children have a latency period where little girls think boys are yucky and little boys think girls have cooties. That's a crucial part of their development. But yet you take these same children who are in this natural healthy stage of life and you throw them in the classroom and they're taught about graphic sex. It's astounding.

Dr. James Dobson: And homosexuality and make them question their own nature.

Rebecca Hagelin: Right. And if moms and dads don't stand up and make their voices be heard, the problem will only get worse. You can certainly look at the breakup of the family, creating this huge culture of rejection that so many children are being raised in today, and I'm afraid we're going to even suffer more of that because today's children aren't being taught the vital role of fathers in the household for instance.

Dr. James Dobson: Rebecca, you've been very candid in your book, Home Invasion, about your own children and some of the illustrations that have come out of your relationship with your kids. You and your daughter have discussed the clothing that she's going to wear and have set up some guidelines. What are they?

Rebecca Hagelin: Yes. The one rule we have when we go shopping, my 13-year-old daughter and I is, we both have to like the outfit before we buy it. She has to like it and I have to like it. I'm not going to make her wear something that she feels nerdy or dorky in and she's not going to wear something that I think makes her look like a little streetwalker. And if you go around the country today and you look at 10,

11-year-olds, you see a huge problem there, where mom and dad aren't doing their jobs. It used to be a dad's great privilege to protect his daughter's honor and virtue.

Dr. James Dobson: Absolutely. And if you invaded that world, somebody's likely to have gotten shot.

Rebecca Hagelin: Absolutely. I had a mom who called into a radio show I was on recently who said, "I hear what you're saying. My daughter's 12, but we spent three hours at the mall and I finally gave in because there just weren't any clothing items there." And I said, "And what did you teach your daughter when you gave in, that it was more important for you to hurry home than it was to uphold the standard that you had told her at the beginning of the day that you were going to uphold?"

Dr. James Dobson: Undermines the entire thing. You also told about one of your daughter's friends who came over to the house.

Rebecca Hagelin: When my daughter has new friends come over to the house, invariably because this is even rampant in the church, the little girls are wearing shirts that are plunging necklines and their bellies are showing, and even the backs of their rear ends are showing, their jeans are cut so low. This is a problem in the church. It's not just in the public schools. So invariably little girls will come into our house and I'm at the door to greet them and I have this nice little speech that I've given many of them, and it goes something like this. "Sarah, God gave you a beautiful body and he created you unique and special and you're a girl of value and your body is to be respected. So let's go upstairs and you can go through my closet and find whatever you want or Kristen's room and we're going to cover you up while you're in our household because we have a lot of teenage boys around here and I don't want any of them gawking at you and treating them less than who God created you to be."

Dr. James Dobson: That's so good. What was her reaction?

Rebecca Hagelin: The stunned look on the faces is just something to capture with a photograph if I could, because first of all, they've never had anybody tell them that.

Dr. James Dobson: That they were of value.

Rebecca Hagelin: That they're of value, that their bodies are something to be respected. And secondly, they'd never been invited up to go through somebody's mom's closet and pilfer through everything, which I'm glad to do because it's all about building a good rapport with the kids by making them feel welcome in your household too.

Dr. James Dobson: You talked about a section of this book, *Home Invasion*, that you refer to as a safe house. What do you mean by that again?

Rebecca Hagelin: Well, safe houses are those homes that I know share the values that my husband and I have determined for our household. We have very social children and they have scores of friends, but there's a real core of about nine homes that our families have partnered with. Where we all know the children have to be respectful. We know their television viewing is monitored. We know their internets have filters and so our kids flow freely back and forth from each other's houses. Every so often, your child will say something that really gives you a warm and encouraging feeling in your heart. A couple of weeks ago, we were up at about two o'clock in the morning with our 16- and 17-year-old boy, and they had about six of their friends, and we were just hanging out in the living room talking, and one of them, Richard, said out of the blue, "Isn't it great guys? I mean, I just feel like I'm in my own house here. Isn't it great how when we go to each other's houses, we all feel like we're with our own families?"

Dr. James Dobson: Now, that's neat.

Rebecca Hagelin: And I thought, "Thank you, Lord." In *Home Invasion*, like you said, it's not about building walls that shut our children off from the rest of the world. It's first and foremost about mom and dad building within ourselves the strength, the courage and conviction so that we can then teach our children strong character values so that when they go out in the world, they have a moral compass and they know how to use it. And moms and dads, your children if you do that, they're going to be the leaders of their generation. When they're adults, they're going to be the ones recognized as strong character that people trust to make decisions. We're doing our children tremendous favors. We're not just protecting them physically and morally. We're helping them build their very best futures.

Dr. James Dobson: Rebecca, the last third of your book is given to resources and suggestions and educational resources and books and organizations that will help.

Rebecca Hagelin: I've got helplines where you can call 24 hours a day to get parenting tips and internet filters and great books like yours, Dr. Dobson. I talk about your wife Shirley's book, *Certain Peace in Uncertain Times*, about the power of prayer and how that's a great tool God gave us to strengthen us and give us wisdom.

Dr. James Dobson: And resources regarding legal concerns?

Rebecca Hagelin: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: And the marriage is here, and videos and books and marketing. There's just a lot in this book that I hope parents will take advantage of.

Rebecca Hagelin: Well, thank you. My heart as a mom that interacts with other mothers on a daily basis who are fighting the battle, is to give them strength and encouragement and hope.

Dr. James Dobson: The name of the book is *Home Invasion: Protecting Your Family in a Culture That's Gone Stark Raving Mad*. Thank you, Rebecca. I really appreciate you writing this book and for the passion that's behind it.

Roger Marsh: Well there certainly are things that you can do to protect your kids online. You've been listening to a classic conversation featuring Dr. James Dobson and author Rebecca Hagelin here on Family Talk. If you'd like to find out more about Rebecca or her book called *Home Invasion*, just visit our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. Of course, Family Talk is a listener-supported broadcast outreach, and we would appreciate your prayers and faithful financial support. In fact, every donation you make helps us maintain a strong Christian voice in the public square. Right now during the month of May, we have been blessed by some special friends of our ministry with a matching grant of \$300,000. So for every dollar we receive this month, it will automatically be matched up to our \$300,000 goal. Now, this is a great way to help even more families and marriages. Your donation will have double the impact.

Every dollar you donate will help us as we fight for pro-life and traditional marriage issues, God-ordained gender identity, and a biblical worldview that parents can grab onto and teach your children. Now, to make a donation online, go to drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org, and you can make a donation securely right there on our homepage. If you prefer, you can also give a gift by phone when you call 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. I'm Roger Marsh, and on behalf of all of us here at the JDPI, thank you for your prayers and your faithful financial support, and be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. With today's Dr. Dobson minute, here's Dr. James Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: Parents should have some firm objectives in mind that'll help guide their child-rearing efforts. It's my view that there are two principles, two objectives that can serve as runway lights to guide the entire parent-child relationship. The first is to convey an awareness of love to our sons and daughters. Without it, they wither like a plant without water. The second is equally important, but less commonly recognized. It's the need to teach our kids to respect our leadership as parents. The child's relationship with the loving authority of his parents sets the stage for his attitude toward every other form of authority he will confront in life. With these two beacons firmly in place, your child has a good chance of making a successful flight and a safe landing beyond adolescence.

Roger Marsh: For more information, visit drdobsonminute.org.