



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: She is Yours

Guest(s): Jonathan and Wynter Pitts

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Dr. James Dobson: Hello, everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, a radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson and thank you for joining us for this program.

Roger Marsh: I'm Roger Marsh and you're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Today on the broadcast we're sharing a conversation that Dr. Dobson had with some dear ministry friends, a beautiful couple recorded just a few years ago. Their names, Jonathan and Wynter Pitts. In 2018, just one year after this interview was recorded Wynter Pitts tragically was taken home. She died suddenly from an unexpected heart-related issue. She was just 38 years of age and left behind her husband, Jonathan, and their four young daughters. We've had Jonathan on the program since the loss of his wife and he's discussed Wynter's life, her legacy, and his journey of grief since she passed. Jonathan and his daughters now live in Franklin, Tennessee, and praise the Lord, are doing well.

Jonathan honors Wynter's memory, as he serves as president of *For Girls Like You* Ministries, which they co-founded together. He is also the executive pastor of Church of the City in Franklin, Tennessee. Before that Jonathan served as executive director of Tony Evans' national ministry, *The Urban Alternative*. You might even listen to Dr. Evans' radio program, *The Alternative*, on some of these same stations where you access our program. We love Dr. Tony Evans. Well, Wynter Pitts was a very gifted and loved mother, wife, and friend. She and Jonathan co-authored a book called *She is Yours* back in 2017. That book is the centerpiece of today's program. We are blessed to share this conversation with you between Wynter, Jonathan and Dr. Dobson here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello everyone. And welcome to Family Talk. I'm your host, Dr. James Dobson. And as most of you know, I'm very passionate about parenting, about raising children and about bringing them into God's kingdom. And I've written many books on that subject, so that's not new to me. But today we're approaching that topic from a different direction, and I've got a room full of kids today. It is really neat to have them here along with their parents. And I want you to get acquainted with them. First of all, I want you to know Jonathan and Wynter Pitts, along with their four lovely daughters. Jonathan, you work for Tony Evans.

Jonathan Pitts: Yes, sir.

Dr. James Dobson: Dr. Tony Evans.

Jonathan Pitts: *Urban Alternative.*

Dr. James Dobson: You and I have met before. And you were here once before, weren't you?

Jonathan Pitts: I was here about two years ago. Yes, sir.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. And you have brought the whole tribe here today, haven't you?

Jonathan Pitts: Caravan and all. Yes, sir.

Dr. James Dobson: And you've been in Colorado Springs for a couple of weeks.

Jonathan Pitts: This is our second week here.

Dr. James Dobson: You had a good time?

Jonathan Pitts: It's been beautiful, relaxing, everything that Dallas isn't right now.

Dr. James Dobson: Tell me about your wife, Wynter, and what we need to know about her, because she's a very special lady.

Jonathan Pitts: Yeah, well, first she's my lovely wife of 14 years. And we met in college in Philadelphia. And what I didn't know when I met her is she's the most driven and hardworking woman I know. She's an author, she's a speaker. She's a mother of four daughters first and foremost, and has been a wonderful mother to my children. A very gracious wife to me, more gracious than I deserve. And that's Wynter. She has a ministry called *For Girls Like You*.

Dr. James Dobson: How do you do all this, including write books and do radio programs like this and other things, and take care of four kids along with it?

Wynter Pitts: You know, I'm not sure, which is why I have to say is just God just been good and helped us to be able to do that. And mostly it's been great because we get to do it with our family a lot. So everything I do revolves around the girls that we're raising. So they are involved in the writing, in the ministry and in the radio opportunities. So God's given us a gift with that.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. And Tony and Lois Evans are your uncle and aunt, right?

Wynter Pitts: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Okay. I want the girls to get acquainted with our audience and we're going to start right here with Kaitlyn. And Kaitlyn, you're how old?

Kaitlyn Pitts: I'm 10.

Dr. James Dobson: You're 10. Okay. And next to you-

Olivia Pitts: I'm Olivia and I'm eight.

Dr. James Dobson: Olivia is eight years old and Olivia is one half of the twin arrangement, right? And her sister's named-

Karen Pitts: I'm Camryn, and I'm eight.

Dr. James Dobson: Okay. And

Alena Pitts: I'm Alena and I'm 13.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, if you could see Alena, you might recognize her, because she was one of the stars in the movie *War Room*. And how in the world did you get a gig like that?

Alena Pitts: It was really a kind of a God thing, but Priscilla Shirer is my cousin, but she's really kind of basically another mom to me, I guess, just because she's basically my mom's sister. And so, she kind of was just like one day she got the opportunity to act or audition in the movie *War Room*. And so everyone was like, oh my gosh, that's crazy. And then she was like, and they're looking for a little girl. Alena, would you like to audition? And I was like, yeah, I won't get it because I've never acted before, but I would love to just try it out and see what it's like. And then I figured out one of my hidden talents and I like to act.

Dr. James Dobson: And you really did a great job. Everybody was talking about you. Did that surprise you when you got that opportunity to be in a big time movie?

Alena Pitts: Yes. It was surprising. Like there was no way I would have gotten that part without God.

Dr. James Dobson: And you know Him personally, don't you?

Alena Pitts: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. Tell me about the part that you played. There are a lot of people that didn't see the movie, tell us about it.

Alena Pitts: *War Room* is a movie about prayer and just the power of prayer. And I was Danielle, the daughter of the parents, and they were having a hard time in their marriage and it kind of affected me most just because I was their daughter and my dad wasn't really paying attention to me because he was always at work and fighting with my mom. And so there's a lady named Ms. Clara, and she kind of

led our whole family onto a path of prayer and like just teaching us about God and things like that, and just taught us the power of prayer.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, would any of the other children like to do something similar, if you get an opportunity?

Olivia Pitts: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: That's a lot of hard work, isn't it?

Olivia Pitts: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Olivia, did you get to go down on set and watch some of the filming?

Olivia Pitts: No, I don't kind of really remember what was happening then.

Dr. James Dobson: That was how many years ago?

Alena Pitts: Two, almost three.

Jonathan Pitts: They all spent quite a bit of time on set. They might not remember, but they spent a lot of time that whole summer on set and just around the set and around making a movie, which doesn't happen normally for little kids.

Dr. James Dobson: Give us your take on how this came about.

Jonathan Pitts: Yeah. Well, I would say Wynter and Priscilla are first cousins. So Priscilla had a conversation with winter simply about Alena auditioning and she auditioned against, I mean, I don't know how many girls it was, Wynter, a hundred girls or so.

Wynter Pitts: I mean, they did, so Alena ... First, Priscilla called and said, "Wynter, there's a little girl, let Alena audition for it." And we were like, "Okay, that'll be fun because we'll get to hang out." But we didn't really think anything would happen from it. And so anyway, Alena auditioned via video, iPhone videos and we sent a couple in and it had been maybe about a month and we didn't hear anything back and we just assumed she didn't get it. Well, we found out that they had been auditioning that whole time, other little girls and lots of talented girls with resumes. And they just said that they prayerfully considered who they wanted to play that part. And so when Alena says it was a God thing, it was a complete God thing because her resume did not look like a lot of the resumes that she was up against, but it was just what God had in mind for her.

Dr. James Dobson: She was perfect for the part. Were you on the set a lot?

Wynter Pitts: Yes, I was on the set every day, basically when she was there. Legally, I had to be, so I was there and just hanging out and watching her. And I was surprised, I

always thought she had a little bit of drama in her, but didn't realize that that was what God was going to use that for, for a purpose like that.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's talk about The Urban Alternative. You are the director of Christian Broadcast Ministry.

Jonathan Pitts: I'm the executive director.

Dr. James Dobson: Executive director. What does that mean?

Jonathan Pitts: Well, I'd just look at it in two ways. I manage our team in the office and then I manage a lot of our support base around the country and try to do what I can to make sure that everything's working together. So I look at myself as the lead culture center internally and externally. But I've been executive director and running the ministry for almost six years since Dr. Evans' wife, Lois, who ran the ministry for 30 years, since she retired. So, yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Wynter, how did you and Jonathan get acquainted?

Wynter Pitts: Well, we met in college.

Dr. James Dobson: Drexel University.

Wynter Pitts: Drexel University in Philadelphia. And we had been there, Drexel's a five-year program, but we didn't meet each other until our third year there. And we just had some friends and we were at a function together and had some friends that are mutual friends and we met each other and it took him about four weeks before he called me-

Dr. James Dobson: Come on, man.

Wynter Pitts: After we met.

Dr. James Dobson: Where were you?

Jonathan Pitts: I was a bit nervous and preoccupied, I guess.

Wynter Pitts: But once that first call happened, things moved pretty quickly and we were just sure that this is what God, that this was it. So we were engaged within eight months and then we spent our senior year of college planning our wedding. We got married a couple of weeks after.

Dr. James Dobson: How long have you been a believer in Jesus Christ?

Wynter Pitts: Since I was a very little girl. I was about five or six years old when I first accepted Christ and then have grown in personal relationship over the years. But yes, grew up in a Christian home.

Dr. James Dobson: How about you, Jonathan?

Jonathan Pitts: I grew up in a Christian home and I always say, I don't ever remember a day where I didn't know the Lord. I had probably 10 or 15 altar call experiences as a child. And I'd say my testimony is that I've tasted and seen that God is good over and over again. And from one glory to the next he's continued to reintroduce me to himself over and over again. So it's been quite a journey.

Dr. James Dobson: Now you're trying to introduce your four children to the Lord.

Jonathan Pitts: Yeah. That's really our biggest priority, and really what the book that we'll talk about is about. But ultimately for us, we've tried to be very intentional about giving our girls every opportunity to know who Christ is and his character and what he's about.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you have been working on this book, *She Is Yours: Trusting God as You Raise the Girl He Gave You*. And I have a copy of the galley here in front of us, but it is not really out yet. It's coming out in a few days, isn't it?

Jonathan Pitts: Yes. September 1st.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, what did you set out to do? That's what you're here today to talk about, about raising, not a girl, but four of them.

Jonathan Pitts: Yeah. Well, I'll start and I'll let Wynter finish. But essentially, she had started her ministry *For Girls Like You* with a magazine about seven years ago when our girls were much younger. And one summer we had decided to write a 30-day prayer journey. It was prayers that we were praying for our daughters, that we wanted to pray for them and share with others. So we wrote this 30-day prayer journey. And ultimately the prayer journey was about, we were stewards of these little girls that God had given us as gifts to raise. And it was a prayer of giving our daughters back to God, to really acknowledge that they are his first and then they're ours to steward. But Wynter, why don't you jump in, maybe I missed something.

Wynter Pitts: No, I think that's it. I think it's just a journey. You know, a lot of times people, do you want a boy? Are you guys going to try for a boy? And it took us a little while to realize like, okay, no, God gave us four girls. He did that on purpose. And so it really was a moment of switch of thinking like, okay Lord, you gave us these girls. Now, what is it that you want from us in terms of raising them? And that just sent us on the journey of dedicating in every way, dedicating our girls back to Him.

Dr. James Dobson: The job is a lot more difficult than it looks, isn't it?

Wynter Pitts: Yes. Well, people always say to me, your hands must be full because you have four girls and I just laugh and I say they are. But it's so much deeper than getting

everybody dressed and getting them out of the door and to sit quietly. Those are all things. But I really say our hands are full because we're called to raise these girls in a way that they know the Lord and that they love Him and that they want to serve Him and be his light beyond us. So, our hands are full, people say it often, but they're much more full than people see when they first meet us.

Dr. James Dobson: This is one of those times when I really wish we had television here. I love radio. And that's what I've devoted my life to is presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ and the principles of family life to as many people who will listen as possible. But there are times when I wish it were television. You have one beautiful family. I mean, four gorgeous kids. And I've already had some time with them in the studio. What are the biggest challenges that you think a young mother and a young father face in today's culture raising kids like this? You send them to public schools?

Wynter Pitts: No, they're not in public school. They're in a private school, just close to our house and we're heavily involved in the school.

Dr. James Dobson: You grew up in a rough neighborhood. You grew up in Baltimore, inner city Baltimore. So you've seen some of the seedier aspects of life, haven't you?

Wynter Pitts: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you worry about your kids when you send them out that front door?

Wynter Pitts: I think, as a mom, yes. I worry about my kids. We talked about Alena being in *War Room* and the other girls, if they want opportunities like that or whatever the opportunities are, but I worry about them. But then I'm reminded that I just, I can't, that I have to just dedicate them back to God.

Dr. James Dobson: They belong to Him anyway.

Wynter Pitts: They belong to Him and He loves them way more than I do. And so even looking at the news and thinking, if we think like, "Oh man, what are our kids going to have? Or what are they going to face? And will they stay in strong for Christ or will they compromise?" But in the end we do our part in raising them and letting them taste God's goodness. And then we trust Him to bring them in.

Jonathan Pitts: Dr. Dobson, I opened the prayer while we were sitting here. And what's neat is the first line of the prayer says "I release my daughter into your care." And we wrote the prayer specifically that way, realizing that although God had given them to us, it was still his primary responsibility, we were still counting and trusting Him with the primary responsibility for their future. So, in releasing them back to Him, we're basically giving up any need to fear because God's the one that protects them. God's the one that will guide their future. So it really was a prayer of surrender and a realization. I think you'd ask the question, what

are the major challenges that parents have these days? And I believe for a lot of parents, especially people that don't know the Lord or aren't walking closely with Him is that they think that they have the sole responsibility for their children. So you see, they call them helicopter parents these days. Parents are trying to manipulate and control their children. And ultimately for us, we've realized that we can't control one child, much less four girls. So, in surrendering them back to Him, you actually, you can breathe a sigh of relief because God's in control.

Dr. James Dobson: And that's why you've put the title on the book, *She is Yours*.

Jonathan Pitts: Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

Dr. James Dobson: You mean that.

Jonathan Pitts: Yeah. And it's a reminder every day for us. And those prayers, it's a reminder that she's his first.

Wynter Pitts: I was going to say, because it's an easy answer, but it's a daily thing that we have to say and surrender that she is yours and releasing control daily.

Dr. James Dobson: Tell me more about your book because that's what I want people to be aware of. What are they going to find in here?

Wynter Pitts: Jonathan and I, like we said, our oldest, Alena is 13, our youngest are eight. So we are very much on the journey of raising our girls. And so the book is that, it's a journey, journeying with us as we dedicate our girls back to God. And so they'll find, it's three categories, their relationship with God, their relationship with the world around them, and their relationship with us as their parents. And so we have talked about the ways that we are dedicating our girls back to God in terms of those three things.

Dr. James Dobson: In fact, you guys talk in this book about the fact that being a mom and dad is a missionary responsibility today. How do you mean that?

Jonathan Pitts: Yeah. Well, I would say one of the things we forget as believers is that our primary role isn't necessarily teaching the gospel, it's living the gospel. And I would say to the degree that our children see us living the gospel authentically will be to the degree that they experience God's character in amazing ways. And ultimately, our girls are going to have different experiences, our children grow up all differently. But as parents, we have a unique opportunity to express God's character to our children in a way that nobody else can. And I'm really passionate about doing that. I mean, when it comes down to little things like showing forgiveness, showing kindness, and showing the fruit of the spirit to the degree that we can do that I think will be to the degree that they can really see God's character come through.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, how I put that in words is evangelism begins at home. You want to evangelize as many people as possible to the cause of Christ, but your first job is to make sure that your children know Him.

Jonathan Pitts: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: And I give that priority above every other job in parenting. It's job one. I know you feel that way too, don't you?

Jonathan Pitts: Yes, sir. One of the things we talk about in the book is the reality that doing that, expressing God's character or attempting to is in our humanness, that one of the things that you'll do is you'll end up sacrificing quite a bit. So we talk about sacrificing even activities. And one of the decisions we made as a family was to not explore all the different sports and all the different activities and all these different things, because it took away from our ability to really relate to our kids. And not that we don't do any of that, we do, but we made our home a priority, which was tough because it's not easy. There's so many things coming at you. As a Christian family, there's so much that comes at you, distractions and things that seem like big deals, like youth soccer or gymnastics and not that there's anything wrong with those things, obviously God has a bigger plan than just activities.

Wynter Pitts: Well, and I'll add it's even more of a sacrifice in that, in the sense that it's sacrificing our comfort and convenience. It's not easy to do family devotions, especially when you've got four kids and everybody's wiggling around and we've got a puppy and we've got this and we want to go here and they want to be at soccer or they want to be at gymnastics, but saying, no, this is going to be up our priority first. And sometimes it's easier to just say, okay, good night.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, that's really true. I found that one of the most difficult things to do, especially when your kids are of different ages. Our daughter was five years, almost five years older than my little boy. In those early days and what he was interested in, she was not. And what he wanted to talk about was not what was really on her mind. And to keep that interest, hold it, like you say, wiggling kids, I found that was hard to do, but it's absolutely necessary.

Wynter Pitts: Yes, yes. So it's just one of the things that we've been willing to, not that we do it perfectly at all, but it's definitely our heart and our goal to do that, to be willing to sacrifice our comfort and our convenience, to just make sure that we're keeping Christ as the foundation and priority of our home.

Dr. James Dobson: You excited about this book?

Wynter Pitts: I am. I'm excited about it. I'm excited about it mostly because our roles are all a part of it. It's not something that we have just done and then we're putting it out there, but it's really our lives. And it's exciting to be able to show and tell fun stories about what the girls and each of them-

Dr. James Dobson: We're almost out of time. Jonathan, talk about *The Urban Alternative*.

Jonathan Pitts: Sure.

Dr. James Dobson: I had a little role in helping-

Jonathan Pitts: A little role?

Dr. James Dobson: Start that ministry and I'm very, very proud of it. I'm proud of Dr. Evans and you work with them and for them. Tell us a little more about it.

Jonathan Pitts: Sure. Well, one, I do want to say that every opportunity that Dr. Evans gets to give you credit for playing a major role in the beginnings of the ministry he does. And he'll always be grateful for that. And I've been the beneficiary of hearing that story over and over again as he travels. It's actually really neat. I believe that God is honoring Dr. Evans' faithfulness of many, many years. For many people that know, he's a great speaker, but I believe that the gift that he has in humility is just as great as his ability to preach and teach. And that God's honoring that. The ministry is broader than it's ever been. Our broadcast is much larger than it's ever been. And God continues to increase.

Dr. James Dobson: How many outlets are you on?

Jonathan Pitts: We say about 1300, about 1300 outlets across the country. And we're about, I think, 130 countries at this point around the world.

Dr. James Dobson: He's been here many times through the years.

Jonathan Pitts: Yeah, yeah. And had the opportunity to be the honorary chairman of the National Day of Prayer last year in 2016, which was awesome. It's fun to be there, to be a part of that. But God's honored his faithfulness. He has, what he calls the kingdom agenda. God's comprehensive rule over every area of life as the theology that he's kind of worked out throughout his ministry. And we're building the Tony Evans Training Center, which is taking 40 years of preaching and content and turning that into an online training platform that we're launching actually this fall. So we're pretty excited about that and a lot of fun to work with him.

Dr. James Dobson: I honor you all for what you're doing with your family. You're obviously trying to bring them up in fear and admonition of the Lord. And it shows in each one of them. Although the sitting here today for 30 minutes is a real challenge for them and they've handled it very, very well. Wynter, thank you for being our guest today. Any last thing you want to say to our listening audience?

Wynter Pitts: No, actually I wanted to add that we are personally even just grateful and have benefited from Dr. Evans, Uncle Tony for me, but just being able to experience what he teaches, but experienced that firsthand and how he raises his family

and how he has led his family has definitely impacted what we're doing and trying to do with our girls. And so we're just grateful as well for that.

Dr. James Dobson: Thank you all for being their guests.

Jonathan Pitts: Thank you, Dr. Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: Bye-bye.

Kaitlyn Pitts: Bye.

Olivia Pitts: Bye-bye.

Roger Marsh: The Pitts family are such a joy to know, and to listen to as well. We hope that you found today's broadcast uplifting. Now, as I mentioned in the opening of the show, Wynter Pitts passed away just one year after this interview was recorded. In 2018, she was 38 years of age when she died of an unexpected heart-related episode. Jonathan and their four daughters have had to walk through a journey of grief over these past few years. They now reside in Franklin, Tennessee and are doing well.

And hey, here's some exciting news. Jonathan has just gotten remarried. His new wife's name is Peta Sergeant. Jonathan and Peta's marriage truly is a picture of God's redemptive power and his ability to bring beauty out of ashes. Jonathan Pitts is the author of three books. Two of which he co-wrote with Wynter. You can visit drjamesdobson.org/broadcast to learn more about those books and Jonathan's ministry. That's drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. And you can also give us a call at (877) 732-6825.

Thanks for making Family Talk a part of your day today and for taking us with you wherever you go. From Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, Dr. Tim Clinton, and the rest of us at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, God's richest blessings to you and your family.

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