



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Faith Must Be Tough – Part 2

Guest(s): Dr. James Dobson

Air Date: October 3, 2023

[Listen to the broadcast](#)

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: Adversity and trials are a common part of our journey here on earth, but when challenging times come, how will we respond? Do we complain and sulk in our circumstances, or do we settle into a spirit of gratefulness and count our blessings? Well, that concept of contentment is where we are headed with today's Family Talk broadcast. I'm Roger Marsh, and in just a moment, we're going to continue hearing a classic presentation featuring our own Dr. James Dobson. It was first delivered in Pasadena, California back in 1983. On yesterday's program, Dr. Dobson touched on the emotional softness of 21st century believers. Yes, it was even a problem back in the 1980s. He also explained how adversity develops toughness. Well, today, he'll draw a line from that idea of spiritual stability to the concept of contentment. He'll address what it means to be grateful, even when our lives get turned upside down. As was the case last time, there's a lot of content to get to. So let's begin. Here is our own Dr. James Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: Spiritual stability is very closely related to emotional stability. Those go together. In fact, there is the mind, and the body, and the spirit as components of this life, mind, body, and spirit. And they are... Get this folks. You with me? They are very close neighbors. And one usually catches the ills of the other. People know that the mind and body interact. You have emotional problems, you're likely to have physical problems, ulcers and colitis and high blood pressure. If you have physical problems, it often can result in emotional problems, different hormonal difficulties and so on. Everybody knows that mind and body interact in their problems. What we fail to recognize in the church is that spirit is right in there too.

What's the first thing that a person says when he gets depressed? He says, "Where's God? Why would he do this to me?" What's the first thing that a person says when he's hit with a catastrophic disease? "Why would God do this? Where is He? Why doesn't He heal me?" Spiritual problems develop out of emotional and physical weakness, and if you do not have stability over here, emotionally, if you are soft, if you're weak, if you're blown over by the

circumstances of life, it will affect you spiritually as well. This is why God wants strength from us. Nothing impresses me more than to see someone claw their way out of tragedy with their faith intact.

I think of a little boy named Jerry that Dr. Anthony Campolo talked about. I heard him describe going to a summer camp for Christian kids a while back, and he was the speaker. And when he got there, he was very impressed, or maybe the word depressed is better, by what he saw taking place socially between the students. He saw them as superstars, the little group that was the in group, the kids who had it together, the good-looking kids, the respected kids, the football player, the cheerleader, the one that everybody was awed by and respected. They had their little group of friends around them, and they ruled with an iron fist. And then there was the out-group. They were the kids who had been hurt and damaged, those who didn't look quite so good and those that didn't have those talents and that confidence. And he said what they were doing to one another was incredible.

And in that group of youngsters that was on the outside was a little boy named Jerry. Jerry had cerebral palsy, and they did incredible things to him. They laughed at him. They ridiculed him. They made fun of him. They mocked the way he talked. Jerry had great difficulty walking and also difficulty talking. And they would come up to him, and they'd say, "What time is crafts?" And everybody would laugh and point at him. Dr. Campolo said he never hated anyone in his life, but he came closer to hating those kids than anyone he's ever known for what they did to Jerry and the others.

Those of you who know me, and know my feelings about people, know that that's a hot button for me. I think American teenagers are vicious to one another. They tear each other to pieces, and if I have a level of intolerance, it's when I see that taking place, where somebody like Jerry or somebody who's not physically handicapped but has been hurt emotionally is vulnerable. And the in group, those that have been blessed by health, those that have been blessed by good homes, those who have been blessed by confidence take advantage of the situation to leave them as bloody masses, as victims, as handicapped the rest of their life. I don't tolerate that very well, and that's what they were doing to little Jerry.

Dr. Campolo said on the last morning, they had a chapel service, and they asked the students to come forth and give their testimony. And the superstars came first. And they came to the microphones, and they gave their little planned speeches. And he said it was empty, and it was hollow. And they went back and sat down, and God seemed not to bless it. And then from the back of the auditorium, Jerry pushed out and made his way to the front. And when they saw him coming, they started laughing, and they made fun of him all the way down, not loud, just little snickers. He said, you could hear the titter that went over the crowd. And it took Jerry a long time to get here, and he finally got to the platform. Took him even longer to get up the steps and came to the

microphone. Please pardon me as I try to tell you what Jerry said, but I think you need to know the setting. Dr. Campolo said that he said only seven words.

He said, "I love Jesus, and Jesus loves me." And he sat down. Dr. Campolo said that fell like rain on that group of students, and they poured out into the aisles and fell at the front of that chapel in repentance and forgiveness because of the courage and the confidence of that kid who had been touched by tragedy. Boy, that impresses me. That's toughness in the face of adversity. Jerry had been made tough by life. I have been made weak by life, and I've seen so many examples of it. I saw it when I first went to Children's Hospital. In fact, I saw it throughout the hospital with little kids who died with a testimony on their lips. But as I drove to the hospital, to the parking lot, there was a building across the street from the hospital. I started going there in 1966. And there was a man that was standing in a second story of that window, and he was always there. I'd drive in. I'd drive home. Drive in. Drive home. That man was always there, about 50 years old, nice looking guy.

So one day as I was coming by, I leaned forward as I went under his window, and I waved at him. And he waved back and smiled. When I went home that night, I waved at him again, and I waved at him every day. And we developed a friendship, having said nothing to each other, knowing nothing about one another. That man was my friend. Finally, my curiosity got the best of me one day, and at lunchtime, I left the hospital, walked across the street, found the building that he lived in, went up some dark stairs and knocked on the door. And the man in the window came to the door, said his name was Tommy, and I told him that I would like to get acquainted with him. He recognized me, invited me in. I sat down. We chatted. Nice guy. Told me that he had been an executive for a major company and had had a massive heart attack and other physical problems. Now, he had to remain in that room, because he needed constant oxygen and other things that were there. He could never leave it or rarely.

Besides that, he had no family and, virtually, no friends that he knew other than the many, many friends that he made on the street. And I tried to get Tommy to give me self-pity. I said, Tommy, "Boy, this is really tough." "No... He always called me, sir. I don't know why. He said, "No, sir." He said, "I'm all right. I'm doing okay." And I attempted to pull from him what his experience was like living in that one room by himself all the time with no one.

And the only negative thing I ever got out of Tommy was I said, "Tommy, now come on. There's just two of us here. I want you to be honest with me. Now tell me do you get depressed up here?" And he said, "I'm going to be honest with you, sir." He said, "I stand out there in the morning." He said, "The only time it gets to me a little bit is I stand out there in the morning. And the sun's coming up, and everybody's coming to work, and I'm saying hello to everybody and greeting my friends out there." And he says, "I'm happy." But he says, "Sometimes, I'll admit to you, that at the end of the day and the sun's going down, everybody's going home and they're going back to their families and I'm going to be here alone, sometimes, that bothers me a little bit. But I'm okay." I

said, "Tommy, can I do anything for you?" He steadfastly refused any kind of help. We shook hands and I left. That went on for years.

Finally, one day, I left the hospital for two weeks to go on a Christmas vacation. And when I came back, I went to work. And I got out of work, and I got in my car to leave. And I pulled up to make a left turn there, and the cars backed me up so that I stopped right underneath Tommy's window. And I rolled down the window, and I said hello to him. And I said, "Tommy, did you have good Christmas?" He said, "Oh yeah, sir. It was great." The light changed. And I turned, and I was gone. I drove about two blocks. Then it hit me. I said, "You dummy. Did you ask that man if he had a good Christmas?" I'd been doing that to people all day long. It was just automatic. "Did you have a good Christmas?" Tommy spent the entire Christmas season in that room by himself, and it was great.

The next day, I came to the hospital, and Tommy was not at the window. He was not there that night when I went home, nor the next day or the next night. My curiosity got the best on me, and I went to see what happened to Tommy. And I found that he had collapsed and died in his little room. The funeral was over, although I doubt if anybody came to it. And the last thing that man ever said to me on the face of the earth was, "It was great," in response to two or three weeks of loneliness in a room at Christmas-time with no friends and no tree and no family.

You see what Tommy had done? He sized up his life. He looked at his circumstances, and he decided, "I will cope with it. It is not going to get me. I will take it just like it is. Tough, I recognize that, but I'm not going to let it blow me off the limb." I think this is what the apostle Paul was trying to say in Philippians 4:11. Let me read it to you. Boy, this is my favorite Scripture. He said, "For I have learned... He didn't say, "This is my temperament. I was born this way. This is my genetics." He said, "I've learned." He had to adapt to it. He had to learn this attitude. "For I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content."

Folks, do you realize where Paul was when he wrote that? He was sitting in a Roman jail, which was probably damp. I wouldn't be surprised if there were rats and spiders and bugs and cockroaches running back and forth. He's in there surrounded by criminals for an act that he did not commit. He, in order to write this, probably had to lift a chain that was on his arm. His feet were chained. Who knows what kind of food they served in a Roman jail at this time? The water supply, who knows what that was? Can you imagine what kind of bathroom facilities were in a Roman jail at that time? What kind of misery that man must've been in, in addition to his physical difficulties. He was an older man by this time sitting in this jail writing, "For I've learned that whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." He says, "I know how to be abased," boy does he ever, "And I know how to abound everywhere and in all things I am instructed."

It's a commandment. See, it's not just his conclusion. He's instructed. And if he is, you are. And if you are, I am. He said, "I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." It really doesn't matter positive or negative. I can cope. Whatever comes, full, hungry, it's all right. "For I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." In other words, my level of expectations is in any place God wants to put it, I can make it. Now, let me reap the harvest of what I'm trying to say.

Let me show you where I've been going, because I honestly believe that this right here that we're talking about is the key to the salvation of the family, not just our spiritual lives, but the family. The family has fallen apart. And what amazes me is that the Christian family, us who have everything to live for and an instruction guide that tells us how to treat one another, our level of divorce is only slightly less than those who believe nothing. That's amazing to me, and I think it's happening folks. It's happening, because millions of us are becoming agitated and frustrated. And we're bailing out on the family over agitations that should never have gotten past our outer defenses as Christians. It's getting through, because there is a softness and a weakness there.

God wants us tough. Little frustration in the family, some sexual problems, perhaps, bail out on it. Little financial stress, blame one another. A few arguments, it's over, despite the echo of the words spoken in solemnity before God and man and the state at an altar like this. It says, "In sickness and in health, for richer, for poorer, for better, for worse, from this day forward, till death do us part." Boy, you talk about toughness. It takes toughness to deliver on a commitment of that nature. See, that commitment says no matter what the expectations, good, bad, positive, negative, whatever they are, I can cope with it.

Had a young lady, 22 years of age, come to see me at the hospital, leaning on a cane, sat down and wept. Beautiful girl or had been. She'd been in a car wreck. She was a stewardess until this wreck and had scarred her face and left her a cripple. And she came in on a cane. Her husband took one look at her and said, "No way, Jose. Not for me." And he left. That's cowardice. Let me give the opposite. Dr. Richard Seltzer wrote a book called *Mortal Lessons*. You ought to read it. It's got some heroes in it. Here's one of them. Contrast this with what I just said. He said, "I stand by the bed where a young woman lies, her face postoperative, her mouth twisted in palsy, clownish. The tiny twig of the facial nerve, the one to the muscles of her mouth had been severed. She will be thus from now on. Speaking of himself, the surgeon had followed with religious fervor, the curve of her flesh. I promise you that. Nevertheless, to remove the tumor in her cheek, I had to cut the little nerve.

Her young husband is in the room. He stands on the opposite side of the bed, and together they seem to dwell in the evening lamplight isolated from me in private. Who are they, I ask myself, he and this rye mouth that I have made who gaze out and touch each other so generously, so greedily? The young woman speaks, "Will my mouth always be like this, she asks. "Yes, I say, "it will. It's

because the little nerve was cut." She nods and is silent. But the young man smiles. "I like it," he says. "I think it's kind of cute." All at once, I know who he is. I understand, and I lower my gaze. One is not bold in an encounter with a God. Unmindful, he bends to kiss her crooked mouth, and I so close, I can see how he twists his own lips to accommodate to hers, to show her that their kiss still works.

I remember that the Gods appeared in ancient Greece as mortals. I hold my breath and let the wonder in." Dr. Seltzer call that man a god. I disagree. He's not a god. He's just a man that loves his wife more than he loves his own convenience, and it's become so rare that we see it as God-like when we observe it. Folks, just this morning, I was made aware of tragedy in this church. There's pain out there. I know that I'm not trivializing that, but you see, faith is knowing that God is in control, even when events swirl out of control. Or as Reuben Welch said when he stood right here, "Faith is knowing that with God, even when nothing is happening, something is happening. God is there. And He wants us to be tough, because He's with us."

Let me leave you with this one thing. Ryan is now 12 years of age. When he was three, he had a horrible earache, bad infection. I took him to the doctor. Shirley and I both did, and they simply could not get it healed. Gave him antibiotics. Finally, the pediatrician told Shirley that the reason it would not heal is that the infection had adhered itself to his eardrum, and it could not heal, unless they went in there and dug it loose from the eardrum. And it was incredibly painful for him, and I knew what was coming.

Shirley was there when the doctor said it, and she had Ryan with her. And the pediatrician asked Shirley to hold Ryan, while he went into his ear with this instrument. And she couldn't do it. It was too painful for her. And she came and got me, and I came in and wrapped my 200 pound frame around Ryan, little 3 year old who was terrified. The pediatrician went into that ear with that instrument. I can still remember the screams of Ryan, but more than that, I can remember his face, for I held him looking the other way. And there was a mirror there where Ryan could look straight into my face and into my eyes. And he looked at me with that panic on his face and said, "Daddy, don't let them do it. No, Daddy. Why would you let them do it?"

And with his eyes, he was saying much more. He was saying, "You of all people? I thought I could trust you. Why would you do this to me?" And I could not explain to him that I brought him here out of love. It was not to hurt him. I brought him to help him. I could not explain. I couldn't let him know that I was hurting more than he. And since then, in my darkest hour, I look into the face of God, and I say, "Lord, why would you do this to me? Why would you let me go through this? You could help me." And then, I remember that He's brought me to that point out of love, that He's hurting along with me, and that He's promised to help me. And what He most wants of me is to be still and know that I am God.

Roger Marsh:

Indeed and indeed, that is a wonderful reminder that God walks with us in our darkest hours. You've been listening to the insightful words of Dr. James Dobson these past couple of days here on Family Talk. Now, if you missed the first part of the presentation, be sure to visit today's broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org. There, you'll find a link for you to listen to day one of this broadcast, or if you prefer, you can request a broadcast CD that includes both parts of Dr. Dobson's presentation. You'll find all of this when you go to drjamesdobson.org and then click onto today's broadcast page. Thanks so much for listening, and thanks for your faithful and continued support of our ministry. 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.