



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** An Honest Conversation about Breast Cancer Awareness

**Guest(s):** Shaunti Feldhahn

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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. Thank you for joining us for this program.

**Roger Marsh:** Roger Marsh here. I'm glad you've joined us for today's edition of Family Talk. October is Breast Cancer Awareness month. Did you know that breast cancer is currently the most common cancer in the world? It's true. One in every eight women here in the US will develop invasive breast cancer over the course of her lifetime and 85% of women who develop breast cancer have no family history of this disease. Make sure that you are up-to-date on your mammograms. It's very, very important that you do that.

Author Shaunti Feldhahn a frequent guest here on family talk. She's a dear friend of Dr. Dobson and Dr. Clinton and of yours truly. Recently, she was diagnosed with this disease of breast cancer back in December of 2020. Praise the Lord, though, Shaunti is doing well and her prognosis is good. Recently, at the American Association of Christian Counselors World Conference in Orlando, she visited with Dr. Tim Clinton and shared some valuable insights that God has taught her since she received her diagnosis. We're going to share their intimate conversation today here on Family Talk.

Now, in case you are not familiar with Shaunti Feldhahn, she is best known for her groundbreaking social research and resulting bestselling books, *For Women Only*, and *For Men Only*, which she wrote with her husband, Jeff. Shaunti has a graduate degree from Harvard University and applies her analytical skills to investigating eye-opening life-changing truths about relationships. Shaunti is also quick to say that her most important ministry is being a wife to Jeff and a mother to their two children. Let's listen in now to Dr. Tim Clinton's conversation with author and breast cancer survivor Shaunti Feldhahn right here on Family Talk.

**Dr. Tim Clinton:** Shaunti, so great to have you in studio. We so appreciate you, your work, and the message of encouragement, hope, help, and strength that you bring to all of us.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Aw, thanks, Tim. It's always good to be with you.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Shaunti, as we get started, the COVID pandemic with the lockdowns and the loss, I think of the racial unrest, tension, trauma that we experience the rioting, the election chaos, the impeachment trials. Are you following me?

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Suppression, censorship, the COVID Delta variant, hurricanes, wildfires, Afghanistan. What an upside-down, insane world we live in, Shaunti.

Shaunti Feldhahn: It's slightly end-times-ish, isn't it?

Dr. Tim Clinton: I think in a lot of ways, we saw a massive uptick in mental health issues, people struggling with anxiety, even suicide's become a common topic in this upside-down world.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah. One of the statistics that just struck me so hard was in January of 2019, there was a study of mental health, that the mental health professionals were all very worried because the percentage of American adults who had clinical symptoms of depression and anxiety had risen to 11% of the population, which everybody was like, "Whoa, it's gotten bad." They did that same study again in January of 2021. It was 41% of the population.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. World Health Organization says depression's the number two illness in the world.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: In life, Shaunti, you're a research expert. You spend your time just looking at the data and trying to communicate, "Hey, bottom line, here's the facts. This is where we're at," type of thing. You look at relationships, you look at things like mental health, and more.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Tim Clinton: Shaunti, you're the research expert. You look at all kinds of data. You help us understand the facts.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Hopefully.

Dr. Tim Clinton: In this journey, we have learned that there's a lot of stress in life, and sometimes we call that "horizontal stress." In other words, it's just a part of everyday life. You're going to experience challenges. They happen.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Even good things can cause stress.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yes. There's so many things. In those horizontal "pages" of our life, sometimes there are what we call "vertical stressors," things that drop in on us. Some people call them "bombs." In the midst of the pandemic and all that, you had a bomb go off in your life.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Everybody hates to hear the C-word for cancer, but tell us a little bit about what happened.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah. It was four days before Christmas last year and I had never had any family history of cancer at all, breast cancer, nothing, and had a mammogram. This is an advertisement for every woman of a certain age listening, get your mammogram because they caught it on this mammogram. Thank God, because it was apparently a very fast-growing cancer, but they caught it very early, and so it was a shock.

Anyone who's walked this journey or anyone who's had a family member go through this, you know the shock that comes along with this. This seems a little surreal, especially because the doctor that called me with the results, she talked for five minutes about something else, like, "How are you recovering from the biopsy? Everything good?" Talking about the stitches and stuff. She's like, "Oh, so I should probably tell you, we found some abnormal cells." "Okay? What do you mean? What does that mean?" She's like, "Well, it means you have breast cancer." I'm like, "Oh, okay," so there's a very surreal element to the whole thing where then you have to go, "Okay, everything in life just changed," and it's a, as she said, "For giving you bad news, I'm giving you the best bad news that I could give you because it's looks like it's Stage 1. It looks like we caught it early," and so it's very disruptive, but there are so many people who I know got worse news than that. And I'm just grateful for God's mercy.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Shaunti, when you and Jeff received the news upfront, what was the first few weeks like?

Shaunti Feldhahn: Well, Jeff was actually with me in the car when the doctor called. We were driving back from a meeting and so there was a lot of shock. We had to go home and tell our kids, two teenage kids, one college-age, one high school, and that was interesting, sort of like, how do you walk your kids through that?

Dr. Tim Clinton: Wow. Their first reaction is, "Mom, you going to be okay?"

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah, exactly.

Dr. Tim Clinton: "Are you going to be okay?"

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah, and so there was a lot of, in the process of this, there was... It's odd. It's sort of a stages of grief thing, and because I'm a researcher and not a counselor,

I don't really know what all the stages of grief are, but I could tell that I was walking through all of them.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Shock phase...

Shaunti Feldhahn: Exactly.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah, numb.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah. It is interesting today, I will say walking through this as a believer and walking through this having just completed a study myself on how do you walk through difficult times with a sense of equilibrium and contentment? How do you find contentment in all things? How do you find joy in all things, even? It was astounding how much God had prepared me for this and helped me prepare, not just myself, but to be able to walk my kids through this and my staff, my team through this.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Anxiety is a word we hear a lot, especially in conversations with women. They're struggling through these last 18, 20-plus months. When you go through a lot of stress and you're a high sea, you need control, you want an ordered world and this is dropped on you, that's the piece that begins to really amp up this anxiety piece, and then worry begins to take over our lives. Talk to us, Shaunti, because you're very open about the anxiety journey and what it's been like.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah. It was, to me, my challenge. This is the challenge for many women, and some men, but it's especially for women. We talk about the fact that your brain has a lot of windows open. It's like Windows on a desktop computer where you have this thought, this feeling, this worry, and they're all tiled on top of each other, and you're kind of bouncing back and forth between all the windows, and so there's this, "What about this? What if this happens? How am I going to tell so-and-so? What's going to happen if such and such doesn't happen? Should I do this kind of surgery or that kind of surgery?" You're dropped in in the middle of this sort of life-threatening illness. You're dropped into having to make all these decisions layered on top of this. Anyone who's gone through cancer is nodding right now as they're listening. because it's shocking how much you as a person in shock are listening to doctors say, "Here's choice A, B, and C. Which one do you want?" I'm like, "What do you mean 'which'? You're the one who's supposed to tell me what I'm supposed to do."

Dr. Tim Clinton: You've got to make the decisions.

Shaunti Feldhahn: You make the decision, but it's still in the middle of the shock, suddenly having to have your brain work well to think through everything.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Shaunti, when you get hit with news, the first thing that happens is your mind goes everywhere.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's hard to turn it off, manage it. You're a researcher, come out of Harvard, the whole bit. You teach us so much, but getting and operating with the facts upfront becomes really important, isn't it?

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yes, because, and I will tell you, one of the things that my surgeon told me immediately was, "Do not google this."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Oh. Yeah, it's terrifying.

Shaunti Feldhahn: You will, you will get a lot of misinformation that will change how you process this. It is so easy, as everybody knows today, it is so easy to absorb misinformation and it changes how you walk through something. If it's the truth that sets us free, I didn't want the lies and the myths causing me anxiety, first of all.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah, because the fear of the unknown is horrible.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yes, and so we want to google because we want to keep control.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Number two: There's a danger, Shaunti, to become overwhelmed with emotion and withdraw, to come into yourself. Everyone listening knows what it's like to have your mind not turn off at 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. You're by yourself.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Those moments, it's dangerous, isn't it? Because they say the antidote to trauma when bombs go off in your life is a relationship, but our natural tendency is to withdraw and feel like, "God, I'm spinning out of control. I need somebody, and the very thing I want, it's the very thing I'm moving away from."

Shaunti Feldhahn: It's interesting that you say that, Tim. I personally never felt that, thankfully. I never felt that turtle, that desire to pull back into my shell. Maybe it's partly because I'm an extrovert and I need people and I need relationships and I had so many friends, colleagues, family members, "What can we do? How can we help? Can I take you out to lunch?" Not that you have time in the middle of this, because it takes a ton of time, but just that emotional support for me was so crucial. I know some people do tend to withdraw. For me, that was a lifeline.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I think that's the important word here. We need each other more during these times, not less. It's hard sometimes to go there because people sometimes don't know how to talk to you.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yes, I was just going to say. Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: They don't know what to say, they don't know the right questions, or they say the wrong things, not meaning to say the wrong things, they just do.

Shaunti Feldhahn: I think, and I might actually, I'm sitting here feeling myself getting emotional. I haven't gotten emotional about this in six months, but I think one of the most powerful things that anybody did for me in the early days was we have some dear friends who live right across the street from us. My friend, Sarah, she's like, "I know you're so busy. How would you feel about every Wednesday night, let's just get together around the fire pit and you invite over a couple of friends who can talk and pray for you and just catch up and see how you're doing." I'm getting emotional describing this to you because it was so-

Dr. Tim Clinton: It meant so much to you.

Shaunti Feldhahn: ... It meant so much and it was nothing huge. It was literally, "Let's get together on Wednesday night around the fire pit and you invite some friends," so my encouragement, if you have a friend who needs someone, and we all do, and you're a close enough friend that you can suggest something like that, suggest something like that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah, we call it "the ministry of presence."

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yep.

Dr. Tim Clinton: There's something amazingly powerful in just being together. You're listening to Family Talk, a division of the James Dodson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, your host. Our special guest, Shaunti Feldhahn, researcher, bestselling author, one of the amazing gifts in modern-day Christianity to us all in relationships and so much more. In the midst of all this, as God is as who He is and how He works in our lives, you were involved in a project. You got to writing devotionals.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Before the pandemic and before the cancer, you started out with a book called *Find Joy*.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Really, is about living above and beyond your circumstances. Tell us a little bit about that and how God used that book in this moment of your life.

Shaunti Feldhahn: I'm still thinking back on it, just astounded at the mercy of God and having me do this before we found out about the cancer, and even before the pandemic hit, because we turned it in to the publisher, I finished all the research, finished writing the whole thing, turned it in to the publisher about a month before everything shut down.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Really?

Shaunti Feldhahn: All of our income went away, all of our speaking engagements got canceled, and now we're like, "How do we pay our mortgage? How do we pay our staff?" so there was a lot that God used of the lessons that I learned about how do you find joy no matter your circumstances right then from the very beginning, and then the book came out in October and six weeks later, "Oh, by the way, you have breast cancer," and it was like, okay, we're going to take this hypothetical theoretical knowledge that I've acquired on how to find joy no matter what's going on and apply it in a much more deep, personal way.

Let me tell you, what God says about finding joy. We studied, because I'm a research nerd, I can't help it, we studied not just what Scripture says but what science says about how to find joy and it's fascinating to see science back what Scripture has said all along. It's amazing what that work did to really prepare me and to walk me through this with a sense of, truly, a sense of joy. I'm not kidding, I really do have this unearthly, miraculous, supernatural, God-given sense of joy and peace and contentment in all of this.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Shaunti, there's amazing ministry work inside this book published by iDisciple, *Find Joy*. I wanted to ask you, what do you think you learned most about yourself, I guess, first of all, in this whole journey, and as you looked at the Scriptures there?

Shaunti Feldhahn: What I learned most about myself is how much, this is going to sound weird, but I've known you a long time, so I'll be honest, how much God has grown me in this area because this news and this pandemic, I think I would've had a very different reaction to this 10 years ago. Walking through the publishing and the studying of these devotionals, because this is actually the third in a series, has really changed my ability to look squarely at God in the middle of these trials and go, "He is there. He is faithful. He is good." Even when these bad things happen, He is good. There's some things-

Dr. Tim Clinton: You just can't fix that.

Shaunti Feldhahn: ... that you just can't fix. There's some things that I have to be like, "Okay, Lord, this is all on You." I will do what I can do, right, and You are going to illuminate each step of the way that You want me to take, but there is a real sense of trust that comes, and it only comes through actually walking through stuff.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You begin to see differently. The old Puritans would call it "the valley of vision." You see yourself, you see God, you see life a whole lot more differently.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah. Well, one of the specific elements in looking at what science and Scripture says about finding joy, one of the things that we ended up doing was we identified, what does science and Scripture say? What are these pieces of the puzzle that will help you get out practically?

Dr. Tim Clinton: Which, by way, I love. I love that coming together.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Oh, yeah. It's really, really handy. I mean, that's actually one of the reasons, I think, just as an aside, why God had a start these as devotionals rather than what I normally would do, which is a nonfiction book because you read a nonfiction book and it's good, but you read it all at once and then you're done, and a devotional by definition is like a daily, okay, here's this one piece or this one element, let's practice this and learn about it and how does it apply to you today, then the next one and then the next one and it's a 60-day devotional, so by the time you get to the end of the 60 days, you've really locked yourself into a completely new habit of thought and a completely new habit of trust.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's about a relationship.

Shaunti Feldhahn: It totally is. It's developing a relationship with the Lord in this specific way.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah.

Shaunti Feldhahn: One of the elements that we found that I had heard and I had seen in science and Scripture for years as being important, but it's essential for this kind of journey, which is to really practice, choose and practice gratitude. I don't like biopsies. They're painful. There's a lot of stuff about this that's very humiliating and invasive and painful when you go through breast cancer and I was finding myself fearful and then I went, "Wait. Okay, apply the practice gratitude." I'm lying there, getting ready for another biopsy, and going, "Lord, thank You that I get to do this, that we have this option of a biopsy. This didn't used to be a thing.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's called a "reframe."

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yes. Okay, counselor speak. Thank you.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yes.

Shaunti Feldhahn: This is what happens when you're a researcher, not a counselor.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's just like you have a mental shift. All of a sudden, it's an aha moment, "I'm going to put this in a different perspective, a different bucket in my life."

Shaunti Feldhahn: Well, and specifically, being grateful. If I could just challenge-

Dr. Tim Clinton: It changes everything.

Shaunti Feldhahn: ... It changes everything. If I could challenge every listener out there, If you have ever said "I don't want to be Pollyanna-ish," we use that as a being unrealistically, flighty, happy, pie-in-the-sky, that's what we equate that to. When I finally actually read the book Pollyanna, I went, "Wait one second,"



because the character of Pollyanna is this little girl who, she's the child of a missionary father who teaches her to rejoice and be glad in all things is because that's what the Bible says and so it's entirely about these hard things happen, but how can I be grateful to God in the middle of this? This challenge happens, but let's be glad about such and such instead. She changes everyone around her because of this and then she has to learn it for herself, going through a really hard thing. Pollyanna-ish is exactly what every single believer is called to be.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hmm. Shaunti, there are two other books in the series, *Finding Rest* and *Finding Peace*. What a great series for our listeners to look into, to be ministered to. Shaunti, I know my wife, Julie, I know we're fighting time here, would say this, and Dr. Dobson would say this, "Tim, ask Shaunti how she's doing and how Jeff's doing and how the kids are doing."

Shaunti Feldhahn: Aw, thanks for asking. I appreciate that. We're doing well. We've gone through... There's three phases of treatment for my type of cancer and we've gone through two of them and are starting the third, so we've done the surgery and the radiation, which was a lot of fun. There's a lot there that my body was like, "Yeah, no. Yeah, no, that's not something we like doing. You're going to have to cancel all your speaking engagements for a while," which I hate, but we've gone through that. The third phase is just a daily pill that I have to take, so we're just starting that, and that's like a five-year thing. But so far, again, God has been so merciful. It was caught early. The prognosis is great.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Well, we stand with you and pray that God will bring healing, continued healing, and grace to you and your family.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Thank you.

Dr. Tim Clinton: By the way, to all of our listeners out there, many listening are on that same journey, or they're somewhere in the midst of a battle. The good news is you're never out of the fight. God help us and strengthen us. Hey, final comment, Shaunti. This broadcast airing in October, this is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Critical.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Critical that every woman out there goes and has a mammogram.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yes. If you are a woman of a certain age and it depends on her family history and everything, do not delay. This was truly God's mercy in my life. If I had gotten a mammogram just a couple of months later, we might be having a very different conversation because the cancer they found in me, it happened to be fairly fast-growing, but it happened because God is merciful, I just happened to be spurred to do it and they caught it early. Don't take the chance that they won't catch it early.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We all stand together and pray that one day we can beat this completely.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Great news, good trends are happening right now, but one day, one day we'll overcome. Shaunti, such a delight to have you in studio today. Thank you for joining us.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Thanks so much.

Roger Marsh: In Philippians 4:4-7, we see a great strategy laid out for handling difficult times. The apostle Paul writes, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice. Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God, and the peace of God, which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

Well, if you enjoyed today's program and would like to learn more about Shaunti Feldhahn, or even order a CD copy of today's broadcast, please visit our broadcast page at [drjamesdobson.org/broadcast](http://drjamesdobson.org/broadcast), that's D-R James Dobson dot org forward-slash broadcast, or give us a call at (877) 732-6825. We love hearing your thoughts on our program and taking your prayer requests as well. Again, our ministry phone number is (877) 732-6825.

Remember, October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. That's when you see the pink ribbons on lapels, you see the NFL players wearing pink socks and cleats, so think pink. Make sure you are up to date on your health checkups and mammograms and make sure that you remind the ones you love, your mom, your grandmother, your sister, to do the same. This is a highly preventable form of cancer if caught early, so make sure you are up-to-date on all of your checkups.

Well, that's it for today. Thanks again for joining us. If you've been encouraged by the ministry of Family Talk, would you consider making a financial contribution in support of our ministry? We are a completely listener-supported broadcast outreach and it's because of generous giving from listeners like you that we can continue to encourage and equip the family. To learn more about how you can support our ministry financially, visit [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org), or call (877) 732-6825. I'm Roger Marsh. Join us again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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