



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: No More Secrets – Part 2

Guest(s): Dr. Dennis Swanberg

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Announcer: Today on Family Talk.

Roger Marsh: The final chapters of the book of Genesis follow the story of Joseph. This man endured tremendous hardship due to his conniving and hate-filled brothers. Towards the end of his life, Joseph's brothers feared that he would enact vengeance on them because of their misdeeds. However, his response was the exact opposite. In Genesis 50:20 Joseph says, "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good. Friend, isn't it good to know that we don't have to feel shame or guilt from a past mistake or severe injustice acted out against us? God is still in control regardless of our circumstances, and He can fully redeem our fallenness for his praise."

Roger Marsh: That concept is where we're going today as we wrap up Dr. Dobson's conversation with Dennis Swanberg. Hello everyone. I'm Roger Marsh and you're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. This radio ministry is completely supported by generous listeners just like you. In just a moment, Dr. Dennis Swanberg will continue talking about his new book, No More Secrets. Last time he talked about his son's challenging battle with alcoholism. Dennis admitted that it was difficult to share this struggle with others because of what they might say. Well, today he and Dr. Dobson will unpack the importance of confession and trusting others with our hurts.

Roger Marsh: Now, before we hear that discussion, let me tell you more about our guest. Dr. Dennis Swanberg is a popular Christian comedian, a motivational speaker, an ordained minister and an author. He travels the country speaking to hundreds of thousands of people every year. Dr. Swanberg holds a Masters in Divinity and Doctorate in Ministry from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He also hosts two successful TV programs called Swan's Place and The Dennis Swanberg Show. Dennis is one of our closest friends who has appeared on our program numerous times. As we begin, Dennis Swanberg will share how his mother-in-law suffered with a painful secret for decades. Let's listen now as he recalls that devastating story on this edition of Family Talk.

Dennis Swanberg: One Christmas some years ago, a little bit before 2012, we were all at this lake place, our whole families, and one day her mom comes up to me on a little path outside of a cottage. I get up early. I'm having my coffee, well, there's Kathy. And so Kathy comes up to me and Kathy said, "Dennis, I want to talk to you. I've never told anybody this, but I feel like I need to tell you. I was raised in Mississippi and my mother died when I was five. I was the last of 13 children. My dad was older when I was born and he was soon out of the question. I was desperate and I married a man and was pregnant. And then he didn't want me and they didn't want the baby. So when I went to one of my older brothers, he gave me a \$50 bill and said, "Go find yourself a doctor and fix this thing.""

Dennis Swanberg: She said, "When I was 17 years old, I had an abortion."

Dr. Dobson: That was illegal at that time.

Dennis Swanberg: Yeah. And I'm just not ready for that. And here I've been married to her daughter for years and years and years and I said, "Sometimes you got to stop and say, "Lord, help me." Because the next few words I say, they will remember forever." We need to remember that with our kids, our grandkids, our loved ones, our friends. So I paused and I took a breath, because I'm always such a talker. And I said, Kathy, "I love you more now than I've ever loved you before. And we love you. You're a good woman, you're a good lady, you're a good wife, you're a good mother." But some days after that that she had just a mental breakdown and was never the same after that.

Dennis Swanberg: In the book, I share that at the very end when she was just lingering there for days and days and no one knew why she was lingering and the family all looked at me and said, "You need to go and talk to my mom." So I went inside, just me and Kathy, a very private place and I only share this because Laurie's entire family encouraged me to, but at that time I was able to communicate basically. I won't share everything, but I said, "You've been good to us. We love you. You're a good godly woman and Jesus is ready for you in heaven and your child is waiting on you, ready to hug you and he or she's going to tell you all that they've been doing in heaven, which is not a boring place so you can go if you want to go. We love you." So I went outside, I got the family, we came in, we all held hands around her and sang Amazing Grace and she went to be with Jesus. Never had an experience like that before.

Dennis Swanberg: But I think Kathy wanted her story out there because I thought, man, if she had been to a place where someone could have sat down with her and said, Hey, I remember when I was 17 or if she could have been part of a ministry to help some young girl say, Hey, well, well let me tell you my story when I was 17, but no one wanted to tell secrets. Secrets make you sick. Silence is the enemy of healing. And that's what made her sick. And we loved her then and we still love her. And her husband George, he came out of the war, World War II and he married her and he knew and he loved her, had two girls and two boys and a great family. A great testimony.

Dennis Swanberg: But I've thought about her sometimes when she held that secret in. What about when she's at the beauty shop and someone says at the beauty shop, how could anybody kill a baby? How could anybody abort a baby? What about when on church, on right to life Sunday, she just sits there. And I thought if she had just opened up and shared that, she could have a cathartic experience for sure, a cleansing and she could say, "Yes, that happened, but God is good and God loves us and God forgives us and God takes care of us."

Dr. Dobson: I wonder if anybody ever told her that there's no sin that Jesus can't forget or cover-

Dennis Swanberg: I'm sure she heard that from the pulpit. But I guess that's one she didn't want to tell. It's like my grandpa, he lost Swanberg when it came from Sweden. He was an orphan. He and his sister and came over on the Lusitania in 1912, he was 14, he lived with a rancher in Texas for 10 years to start a pay him back. He lost his arm when he was 49 in a cotton gin accident. So he farmed with one arm until he was 77. He just had a tough old life all the time. I used to say, "Grandpa, what happened back in Sweden when you were a child, with all this, your parents died or whatever?" And he would just say, "Why talk about something horrible?" I said, "Well, I just sort of want to know grandpa." Never would tell us.

Dennis Swanberg: Well, after he passed, my older sister, she did research and we checked with folks in Sweden and the church there was in the habit of placing a mark by your name, your birth certificate if you are an illegitimate child. And he knew that and was ashamed of it. Now, doc, I don't know why people use that word. If you're here, you're legit. But he had to live with it and he never would tell us.

Dennis Swanberg: But here's another thing. I've often thought, "Man, if grandpa Elif would have told me, I would just loved him more, I'd loved on him, he wouldn't have had to hold that in."

Dr. Dobson: He never did reveal it?

Dennis Swanberg: Never did tell us, never did reveal that. And we always wondered something happened back there. What happened? I've talked with friends and ministries about getting a hole in the heart when you're fatherless, when you don't have a dad or how it's like a hole in your heart. And hard to heal. My mom, Pauline Bernadine, she's 90, she's red bend. She said, "I've read the book two times, and I don't know if I had to tell everything. I said, "Well, mom." I said, "Why don't you start to share it all?" "I know, my Gosh."

Dennis Swanberg: But here's the deal, doc. I have to realize in Lori and Chad and Dusty and Brittany and all of us, little LJ and our future grandkids is that there's more secrets today and more secrets tomorrow and just because I wrote a book Hold No More Secrets, doesn't mean all secrets are gone. Things happen. It's so good if we have someone to go to. I'm glad we can go to our Lord Jesus at any time,

night or day. The Catholics have a little something on us about confession. We need to confess that our sins might be forgiven, that we may be healed. We surely would tell the Lord, but when you have a confidant, someone who can keep their mouth shut at the right time, at the right place in your life, and you wonder, when do I tell it? God will give you the time. God will reveal to you.

Dennis Swanberg: I had a dear friend put this in the book. I asked my friend this question, "What is the worst thing I could know about you?" That's pretty heavy, isn't it? What is the worst thing I can know about you? Let me tell you something. The Lord knows all about us and when you have our friend that you can go up and confess and help and work through accountability, friend to pray with you, work with you to be released of all that stuff, I guarantee it, Satan wants to stink it up and he wants us to be down and he wants us to be useless, but we need to be liberated.

Dr. Dobson: I only got your book today. You brought it with you. You didn't send me one so I could read it before you got here. But I wonder, a few also said in this book, share your secrets, but be careful who you share them with.

Dennis Swanberg: Exactly.

Dr. Dobson: You share them with someone who isn't mature enough to keep them quiet or to condemn you for it, when you've already confessed it to the Lord. You have to be really careful with that, and specially within a church setting.

Dennis Swanberg: You have to be really careful. You have to watch people. It takes time before you'll know. Like this friend of mine, when he asked that question, what's the worst thing in your life? He felt safe to tell him and that was the changing moment of his life that now his ministry is huge.

Dennis Swanberg: But you have to have that confidentiality, that why-

Dr. Dobson: Yeah, there it is. Because for some people I would say it's not of your business.

Dennis Swanberg: Here's one, doc. Jesus had to be careful about even the inner circle of three and the disciples. But there was one guy, Lazarus, we don't have one word in the Bible from Lazarus. Couldn't get a word in edge wise between his two sisters. But, Bible says they all knew Jesus loved him. You know why I think he loved him? He could keep his mouth shut. When he was about to rise from the dead, he asked people to roll the stone. They had to do something, and when he came out, he asked them, "You take off those stinking dirty linens, carefully, be tender." Some traditions say that Lazarus lived another 30 years. The Bible says many people came to Jesus because of Lazarus. I think Lazarus may have been his best friend.

Dennis Swanberg: And I think there was probably a day when Lazarus looked at Martha. She's probably still alive and sort of bossy. He says, "Martha, I'm about to go. Get out

the grave clothes." And she did. And then she probably looked at him and she said, "Well, here they are, and I've washed them a hundred times, but they still stink death." "Well, that's all right. Put them on. And he had to put them on because he did die." Here's the difference, and here's the hope for all of us. When Jesus was resurrected, he took his grave clothes and he folded them neatly and he never ever put them on again. He's our hope. He's the answer. We go boldly to his throne of grace to find help in time of need.

Dennis Swanberg: And you're never more like Jesus, I think, and like God than when you care and you're loving and you're confidential and you can listen to someone share their heart. My friend, if you can't keep your mouth shut, I feel sorry for you. Cleanse yourself today. Ask forgiveness for today and be a friend and be confidential. We have to be careful, doc. Like you said, I don't want to cast my pearls before swine and have them trampled over. I have trusted friends and I have some I'm their trusted friend, but if I ever give that up, woe is me!

Dennis Swanberg: We have that in the Bible. No more secrets. You got to be careful who you talk to.

Dr. Dobson: And the ultimate source is Jesus.

Dennis Swanberg: Oh yes.

Dr. Dobson: Remember an old him that says there is no other trusted friend or brother. Tell it to Jesus alone. You remember that song?

Dennis Swanberg: That is an awesome, awesome song.

Dennis Swanberg: Here's one I put in the book because I loved it so much. I'm a, I'm a get it out here so I'll make sure I get it. All right. Stuart Hamblen was a great cowboy and he was in a Billy Graham crusade. Can you imagine what that must, in Los Angeles? John Wayne saw him at a party and he said, "Listen, Stuart, heard you went to that Billy Graham meeting." And Stuart Hamblen answered John Wayne and said, "Well, Duke is no secret what God can do."

Dr. Dobson: There was.

Dennis Swanberg: And then the Duke said, "Sounds like a song, Stuart." So Stuart Hamblen went home. He sat down in his kitchen next to his grandfather clock and he started writing. The chimes of time ring out the news, another day is through.

Dr. Dobson: Someone slipped and fell.

Dennis Swanberg: Someone slipped and fell.

Dr. Dobson: Was that someone you.

Dennis Swanberg: Was that someone you. You may have long for added strength, your courage to renew. Do not be disheartened. I have good news for you. It is no secret what God can do, what he's done for others. He'll do for you with arms wide open, he'll pardon you. It is no secret what God can do. There is no night for in his light. You never walk alone. Always feel at home, wherever you may go. There is no power can conquer you while God is on your side. Take him at his promise and don't run.

Dr. Dobson: Run away.

Dennis Swanberg: Don't hide. You know when we're at the National Day of Prayer, miss Shirley, she headed that thing up for 25 years and you were along her side. That's the quietest I think doc's ever been for 25 years at National Day of Prayer to miss Shirley, she's president.

Dennis Swanberg: But when we were there with you all for that last year, my loved wife is so quiet, doesn't say much about nothing. She went up to you all and told you some of the stuff, and she came back over to me, and I said, "Did you tell them anything?" She said, "Yeah, I told them most everything." "Oh, you told Dr. Dobson, miss Shirley?"

Dr. Dobson: She stood right face to face with me.

Dennis Swanberg: And she said, "Yes, I did." And I went, "Okie-dokie. They'll flesh wonders. I wonder if he'll never let me speak for him again." Well, you know what? The proof's in the pudding. I'm here right now with you and Ms Shirley, thank you for being a confidant.

Dr. Dobson: She gave you the title for this book, no more secrets.

Dennis Swanberg: She gave the title. She said, "I'm tired of it. I'm tired of it with my family, your family, our family." I wanted to quit writing it. I was right in the middle of it. I said, "It's getting worse. I need to quit. I don't even need to write this book." She said, "You're writing it." And she said, "I'm tired of it. No more secrets." And when she said that, I said, "That's what we'll call the book baby. No more secrets."

Dr. Dobson: You feared that I would think less of you if she told me your boys were having trouble? Satan was talking to you, man.

Dennis Swanberg: I guess Satan... And sifting on me, but he wouldn't sift on her. She went right-

Dr. Dobson: She's a very quiet lady. She's not the one to go talk about a lot of stuff. I was honored that she shared that with me.

Dennis Swanberg: Tim Clinton is good friend of both of ours. Tim wrote the forward for my book and he said, "There's a little something." He said, "You need this book. It's time

to get beyond the past, the pain and the secrets." And that's what we want for people. We want people to be liberated. I want them to laugh again. I want your loved ones to come to the reunion. I don't want them to have to dodge Christmas or Thanksgiving. I want them to come in with her head held high. I want them to have a good time. Though there might be someone in the crowd going, "They're not theirs. There's that boy who had a lot of trouble with him or her." Or "Oh, that's her daughter." Well, don't worry about them. You come in with your head held high because Jesus loves you.

Dr. Dobson: A lot of those hidden secrets come out of childhood. It's a thing you're embarrassed about from your childhood and Shirley is sitting here right now, I hope she won't mind my saying this, but her father was an alcoholic and she was embarrassed by that and when somebody would bring her home. She would ask them to let her off a block away so people would not know where she lived. And when we first started going together, we'd gone together through the summer and sitting one night talking and she told me about her childhood and she thought I would walk away. She thought that I wouldn't care. And I said to her a little bit later, "That is my desire in life to make up to you for what you have lost and what you missed." And I've been working on that ever since. Instead of rejecting her, that made me love her and wanted to be tendered to her and to take care of her. And if you choose the right person, there is freedom in what you're talking about.

Dennis Swanberg: There is. But I want you all to listen to me, men. Most of the time there's not anyone like your wife that has your back. And my wife has my back. And there's been times when I've opened up with her on my knees, tears rolling down my cheeks and she's been gracious to me. As gracious as she's been to her mother and gracious she's been to my boys.

Dr. Dobson: She's a great lady. She really is.

Dennis Swanberg: I just remind her, I said, "Baby, make sure you're gracious to yourself because you're been gracious to all of us."

Dr. Dobson: I want you to describe for me in these closing minutes who you had in mind when you wrote this. Whenever I write a book, I've got somebody in mind. You had someone in mind here.

Dennis Swanberg: My focus probably is that mom and dad, that grandma and grandpa, what did we do, what did we not do. For them to know and to understand that God loves them and he loves their kids. He loves their grandkids. I want them to know that it's okay.

Dr. Dobson: They carried a burden all those years.

Dennis Swanberg: They carried... And when I go and speak, I'll have people come at churches conferences and they'll come up. When all of a sudden I share a little bit about

this, the room changes, the radio just changed. Just you open it up about Shirley's dad, the room in here. We changed, right there. And the room changes and I'll have people come up and go, my son's in prison or my son's on drugs or he's having alcohol. Or I'll have a guy come up and go 26 years, "I've been sober 26 years." I said, "Thank you buddy. Let me hug you." And give him a big hug. I had a guy come up to me one time, he had his 25 year sober coin. He said, "Look here, brother Dennis, I just got my 25 years sober coin." I go, "Oh man, that's awesome." He said, "Give it to your boys for me when you get home."

Dr. Dobson: Really?

Dennis Swanberg: His 25 year coin. "Tell them they can do it."

Dr. Dobson: The other side to this story that you've written about, the side that you have written is to share your secrets with right person. The other side of that is the recipient who needs to give you love at a moment like that. It's really about love. It's a two sided story, isn't it?

Dennis Swanberg: It's two-sided. And here's another thing. There's times when I'll share something like that and I'll may have some folks in ministry, other pastors started go, "Well, he was gone too much. He was on the road all the time. Should have stayed home more or whatever." You think I hadn't thought about that 10,000 times? But here's the deal. I won't say anything. Even if they write in my face about something, I go, "Well, I appreciate you sharing that." I've had, I can't tell you how many time, dozens of times I've had that a pastor call me a year later, two years later and said, "Brother Dennis, would you mind if my wife talks to your wife and could I talk to you? Our son's in trouble." I don't throw it back into his face. I go, "Sure, be glad to help you."

Dennis Swanberg: Because the bottom line is we're all in this life together. It's just a matter of time when things happen. But praise the Lord, we have our heavenly father who's always there and it's not over. And my boys, I tell them all the time, you're in the locker room, second half ballgames or one of the third and fourth quarter and sometimes over time, here's a bottom line. God wants you to win. And that's what I want everyone to know. You can win. Mom, dad, you can win. Son, daughter, you can win. Mamma, pappo, spooks, pops, big mama, gaga, you can win. Pastor, you can win. A single person, you can win. Whatever your challenge is, you can win.

Dr. Dobson: Let me leave our listeners with this thought. Jesus, who knows every one of your secrets, there's not a thing he does not know about you, you've committed them to him, but you still drag along that chain behind you because it's an embarrassment. But someday he's going to look at you and say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Dennis Swanberg: Unbelievable.

Dr. Dobson: This is going to be a marvelous moment. I think he's going to say that to you someday, Dennis.

Dennis Swanberg: I hope so. And I hope folks will remember. David wasn't perfect. He messed up bad. But remember what God told Solomon? He didn't bring up Bathsheba. He said, "I want you to have the heart of your daddy."

Dr. Dobson: Yeah.

Dennis Swanberg: Wow. He knows the hearts of all of us. And so-

Dr. Dobson: And he killed a man.

Dennis Swanberg: He killed a man.

Dr. Dobson: Took his wife.

Dennis Swanberg: You're right. Took his army planned.

Dr. Dobson: God forgave that. If he can forgive that, he can forgive you.

Dennis Swanberg: I want you want you to have the heart of... Amen. I want you to have the heart of your father.

Dr. Dobson: Dennis, I've loved having you here yesterday and today and the name of the book is No More Secrets by Dr. Dennis Swanberg. We've heard you speak many times. We've laughed with you. We've cried a little with you today. I love you like a brother.

Dennis Swanberg: Thank you. I love you.

Dr. Dobson: Thanks for being with us.

Roger Marsh: Well, this is Roger Marsh again, and what a powerful program we've been listening to here on Family Talk. We cannot let our past define us or keep us from God's plan for our lives. Dr. Dobson's guest these past couple of days has been author and comedian, Dr. Dennis Swanberg. Learn more about his ministry and his brand new book, No More Secrets when you visit today's broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org.

Roger Marsh: Did this two part conversation minister to you directly? If so, please go to our Facebook page and leave your thoughts or comments on today and yesterday's post. You'll find our profile by going to Facebook.com and then searching for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. We appreciate hearing how our programs are impacting you and your family. So going out to Family Talk's Facebook page and comment on either of the broadcast posts, centering on Dr. Dobson's interview

with Dr. Dennis Swanberg. And please know we look forward to hearing from you.

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Roger Marsh: Thanks so much for your support and thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again tomorrow for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Have a blessed day.

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