



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Love Like You Mean It – Part 1

Guest(s): Bob Lepine

Air Date: February 14, 2024

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- Dr. James Dobson: Welcome, everyone, to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute, supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.
- Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and happy Valentine's Day. Today we're going to hear a classic program featuring Dr. James Dobson and his special guest, Bob Lepine, discussing what love really means. Bob, of course, is a teaching pastor and elder at the Redeemer Community Church in Little Rock, Arkansas. He is also the co-host of the Truth for Life Podcast and also serves as the morning host for the Family Radio Network. Bob is also the author of several books. Here now is Dr. James Dobson to introduce more about today's episode.
- Dr. James Dobson: Hello, everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, and this program and all the others that you hear on this broadcast was produced by the James Dobson Family Institute. And thank you for tuning in today and for your support. People are always surprised to learn that I love Beatle music, and I've tapped my foot to it since 1964 when the Beatles first broke on the scene. The individual Beatles had a terrible godless impact on their generation. They promoted marijuana and all kinds of hard drugs and womanizing and profanity and other things, but their music was unlike anything ever written.
- And one of their most popular songs was entitled, "All You Need Is Love." You'd recognize it, but not from my voice. Well, love isn't all you need, because you need a little more than that. But the Fab Four, as they were called, might have contributed to the confusion. Today we're going to take a hard look at love courtesy of Bob Lepine who has written a book on that subject entitled *Love Like You Mean It*. And the subtitle is *The Heart of a Marriage That Honors God*. Bob, welcome to Family Talk.
- Bob Lepine: Dr. Dobson, it is an honor to be with you. Thanks for the invitation.
- Dr. James Dobson: *Love Like You Mean It* is, I believe, your fourth book, isn't it?
- Bob Lepine: Yeah, it's a book that I have stewed on for many years, just recognizing that most people think about love in emotional terms rather than thinking about it, as I like to say, with work boots on. In fact, as I wrote the book, I was thinking

about your book *Love Must Be Tough* and the impact that book had on me as a young man, recognizing that love is an action word. It's not an emotional word. It's something we're called to live out and to know how to do. And sometimes love is hard, sometimes it has to be tough, and this book is a call to married couples to embrace a more biblical understanding of what love is supposed to be.

Dr. James Dobson: You refer often in the book to your wife, Mary Ann. How long have you all been married now?

Bob Lepine: We got married in 1979, so 41 and a half years at this point.

Dr. James Dobson: You're a baby. We just celebrated our 60th.

Bob Lepine: Oh, that's wonderful. Congratulations.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, thank you. It's been a real ride. Amazing thing is during the sequestration of the virus, those have been some of the happiest days of our lives just being together. Isn't that amazing? I couldn't live with anybody else for more than two weeks, and I've been with Shirley for 64 years, counting courtship, and I just never tire of her. That must be love.

Bob Lepine: You and I have a similar pre-marriage experience because, if I remember correctly, there was a time when Shirley came to you and said, "Yeah, this is over. We're not going anywhere," and she dumped you. Mary Ann dumped me while we were dating as well. Isn't that true? Isn't that what happened with you?

Dr. James Dobson: No, you got it backwards. I'd gone with-

Bob Lepine: Oh, you were the one who dumped her?

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, I'd gone with her for two years. I was about to go into graduate school and I didn't have any money and I just didn't see getting married. And it was her senior year in college and I was already out of school and I was about to go into graduate school, as I said, and I just thought it all over and didn't feel that I was ready to get married. But I didn't want to tie her up during their senior year because there would be other guys that would be standing in line for her, and so I cut her loose and it was the biggest mistake of my life. And by the next morning, I knew it. I stayed up all night thinking about having hurt the best friend I ever had, and so from there to marriage was a short journey.

Bob Lepine: Well, here's what I remember from that story. I remember you saying that when you broke it off with her, she took it somewhat coolly and said, "Well, if that's what you think." She didn't moan or groan and you were a little taken aback by that and found yourself even more attracted to her as she was being broken up with, right?

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you've got a good memory because it was not till I knew I was free of her that I knew I desperately wanted her, and it often works that way. And Shirley handled that beautifully. She just sat in the car when I told her that I wanted to break up with her, and she was holding the comb and she was just tweaking it as she sat there. And then we got out of the car and I walked her to the dorm and I said, "Are you going to let me kiss you goodnight?" And she said, "No, let's just shake on it." And she just walked away from me. She let me go with such dignity that I immediately thought I'd made a mistake. And it is really amazing how that works. I wrote a book about it called *Love Must Be Tough*.

Bob Lepine: And I remember as I read that book getting a fresh vision of what love is supposed to be. Because I think, and you've seen this, so many young couples have this idea of love that it's just supposed to be Hallmark movies all the time, and we're supposed to feel a certain way every moment of every day. And that's just not the reality of married love.

Dr. James Dobson: It doesn't work that way. You cannot stay on an emotional high for a long time. You will come down off of it. And some people don't go together long enough to experience the highs and lows, and when it happens in marriage, they think they made a mistake. But it's not a feeling, it's a determination, it's a commitment. And you've talked about that.

Bob Lepine: Well, you mentioned The Beatles earlier, and I do think that popular music and Hollywood movies and the Hallmark Channel, like I said, have all worked together, conspired together, to give us this highly romantic idea of love. And the Bible comes along I think and corrects that for us and says, "Love is going to be harder than you imagined, but when you press in to these character qualities of love that are outlined in 1 Corinthians 13, you find a deeper, richer, more satisfying kind of relationship than if all you had was the whip cream and the froth of romantic love."

Dr. James Dobson: And you have based this book on that chapter in 1 Corinthians 13, haven't you?

Bob Lepine: Yeah. I was doing a sermon series at our church on that passage and just talking about how love is foundational to everything in the Christian life. And as I worked on it, I sensed the Lord saying to me, "You talk on the radio regularly about marriage and family. Why don't you apply this passage to the marriage relationship and help couples understand what it means for love to be patient in marriage or for love to be kind in marriage or not keeping a record of wrongs? All of the things that are described in this passage." And I went back to that passage with fresh eyes and I said, "There's a lot for husbands and wives to learn here." And that was really the genesis of the book, *Love Like You Mean It*.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, reading it, it's obvious that you just got a lot of information out of it and we want to be talking about that. You say early on in the book that during your early married life, that you had an immature view of love. Did I understand that correctly?

Bob Lepine: Yeah. I came into marriage thinking, what benefits will I accrue from this relationship? I'm about to pledge myself to somebody else, so what am I going to get out of this? What's the good that's going to come my way? And it wasn't long before I recognized that the heart of God for marriage is not for us to be focused on what am I getting out of this? It's more for us to focus on what am I giving in this relationship?

Dr. James Dobson: It doesn't work as a selfish relationship, does it?

Bob Lepine: It doesn't. It'll deteriorate. Rather than asking the question, am I happy? And even rather than asking the question, is Mary Ann happy? I think the question we need to be asking is, is God happy with how we're living together as husband and wife? And when that's our pursuit, when that's our goal, the richness of the reward we receive by making that our focus is just immeasurable.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, that is a wonderful concept and we want to build on it. Why is love so difficult to understand? You said you came into marriage not fully understanding what it was all about. I think that's rather typical, and maybe the culture teaches false concepts of love, but we all start out that way. We have to learn how to give. It doesn't come natural to us, does it?

Bob Lepine: No. What comes natural to us is to be self-focused and self-oriented and to be thinking like I was thinking, which is what will I get out of this and what am I willing to trade in order to get what I want? Between the cultural definition of love and our own innate selfishness, we start off in marriage with wrong thinking about what love and a relationship should look like, and that's where we so desperately need the Bible, we need the Holy Spirit, we need God to redirect our thinking so that we can get His understanding of what love is. I think often, Dr. Dobson, of Jesus' statement, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lays down his life for his friend," and that's the idea in marriage. We're laying down our lives for one another.

Dr. James Dobson: Bob, I think it's a wonderfully creative thing to look to the Creator to define love. That's what you've done essentially, isn't it? The Bible is His marriage manual.

Bob Lepine: And I didn't really realize that. In fact, when I first came to Family Life back in 1992, I remember a conversation with Dennis Rainey where he was talking about marriage and family and he said, "Are you passionate about marriage and family?" And I said, "Well, I'm passionate about the things of God, and to the extent that marriage and family is on the heart of God, yeah, I'm passionate about that." What I didn't realize at the time is how much marriage and family is on the heart of God, how central it is to how we live out our faith. Of course, you've recognized this for decades and have pointed us in this direction. Marriage and family is so integral to everything that God is doing in human history that we need to be getting it right, and getting His definition for love and marriage right.

Dr. James Dobson: What do you find there is a way of a definition of sacrificial love? What does that really mean day by day by day?

Bob Lepine: Well, I'll tell you a story. I sat down with a young couple. I was doing their premarital counseling many years ago, and I asked them on the first night of premarital counseling to write down their definition of love. And what I got back from them that first night was pretty romantic. It was a cross between Rod McEwen poems and a Hallmark card, and it was sweet, but it wasn't really durable. And by the end of our premarital counseling, they came away with an understanding that I believe that love really does come down to commitment and self-sacrifice. Those are the two cornerstones of biblical love, that we're committed to one another to say, "Whatever happens, I'm here. I'm not going anywhere. That's what we said when we vowed. For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, sickness and health, whatever. I'm staying here, no matter how hard it gets.

Dr. James Dobson: I wish a young man and a woman about to get married fully understood the import and the significance of the wedding vows, because you are committing yourself for life. Of course, we all know them. "To have and to hold from this day forward, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death do us part, according to God's holy law." That is the very definition of commitment. You stay together. You're committed to each other. That word commitment I think is the essence of it.

Bob Lepine: I think it's so foundational, and I think it's why we have couples make a vow. We don't make people take a vow on something that's going to be simple and easy. You take a vow for something that's going to be challenging and tough, and where you're going to want to quit from time to time, and the vow is there to keep you from quitting. And that's what this is all about. When I'm doing a wedding, I will often say to couples, "This vow that you're about to take is not a romantic statement you're making to one another. This is a bold declaration that you expect hard things to come your way, and when they do, you're not going anywhere and you're going to figure out how to work this out."

And I say with marriage, we need to treat it like it's the only relationship we're supposed to have, and that means take better care of it in the first place. And when it breaks down, because it will, you go get help and you get it fixed. God's grace is available to help couples through the challenges and struggles of marriage if they're both willing to submit to Him and surrender to Him.

Dr. James Dobson: But Bob, what if you marry a clunker?

Bob Lepine: Well, you'll have to ask Mary Ann, because she did.

Dr. James Dobson: All right.

Bob Lepine: We all start off as clunkers. We're two selfish, sinful individuals coming together to form a marriage. And yeah, that's where God goes to work. In fact, my greatest growth in my relationship with Christ has come through the challenges that I've faced in marriage, and that's been God's laboratory for making me more like Jesus.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, let's work our way through some of the concepts of 1 Corinthians 13. Let's start with the word patience. What does that mean in reality?

Bob Lepine: Isn't it interesting that that's where the Bible starts when it says, "Here's what love is?" It is patient. We would start with love is affectionate or love is endearing, but it starts with patient. And I like the old King James language that says, "Love is long-suffering," because patience is the ability to suffer long, to bear up in the middle of all kinds of challenges and all kinds of trials. We patiently endure. And we need to be quick to say we're not talking about enduring physical suffering. If somebody is experiencing physical abuse, the Bible is not saying, "Well, you just bear it." What the Bible is saying is that when you face the kinds of challenges that are the irritations and the annoyances that are going to come with a marriage relationship, you make the decision ahead of time that you are going to bear those things and not find yourself ground down by that. Patience is commitment and self-sacrifice in the midst of the regular challenges that we face in a relationship.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, long-suffering takes the romance out of it, doesn't it?

Bob Lepine: And isn't that interesting? Because that's where Paul starts. He doesn't ease his way into explaining what love is. He starts right out by saying, "Okay, I'm going to start with the hard thing. Love is patient. You suffer long in this marriage and you endure." The Bible says, "Jesus patiently endured for the joy that was set before him." He endured the cross. And I think in marriage we patiently work through the challenges that we deal with. We suffer through those things because there's a joy on the other side that God has promised us if we will be patient with one another in our marriage relationship.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, it's not at all that the thrill of it all isn't important, because it is, but it's the commitment that undergirds it all. And that's where the permanence, that's the commitment, that's the steadiness that comes from that determination.

Bob Lepine: Whenever Mary Ann and I have done premarital counseling together, I will often say to these couples who are thinking about getting married, I will say, "Now, look, this is going to get hard. This is going to be tough." And Mary Ann will chime in, she'll say, "And it's also going to be wonderful and glorious." And I say, "Yeah, it is, but it's going to be hard and tough." And she'll say, "But don't lose the fact that it's going to be wonderful and glorious."

Dr. James Dobson: It can be both, actually.

Bob Lepine: It can be.

Dr. James Dobson: And it must be.

Bob Lepine: And it's supposed to be.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Well, then it goes from patience to kindness. What's the meaning of kindness there?

Bob Lepine: Kindness is the proactive desire to bless another person. It's more than niceness. Niceness can be polite or we can be friendly toward another person. Kindness is the decision to proactively seek to bless another person. The formula I use in the book is that my goal is your good. So as we start a marriage relationship, we start with that objective, that my goal in this relationship is your good. You are thriving. You are growing for you to be the person that God causes you to be. And I think sometimes too, Dr. Dobson, kindness is the little things we do for one another in a marriage relationship that we often take for granted. For example, I went to the drawer this morning and opened my drawer and there were clean undershirts in my drawer, and those magically appear there once a week. And I have to pause from time to time and say, "This is an act of kindness on the part of my wife to say, I'm going to serve you in this way and do these little things that are a blessing to you, that make life work for you." That's kindness.

Dr. James Dobson: That illustration reminds me of what happened a couple of nights ago in our family, and I don't want to sound like I'm some kind of Mr. Perfect, but we were almost asleep and Shirley realized that she had left something in the washroom downstairs. And I said, "Can I get it for you?" And she said, "Yes." And I got out of bed, I went downstairs, turned on the light, found what she wanted, and came back and gave it to her. Now, that was just a simple little thing, took five minutes, but it was an act of kindness. And you indicated in your book that that kind of kindness is the marital disinfectant. Explain that.

Bob Lepine: Yeah, it really does wash away a lot of the toxins that can build up in a marriage relationship when we do an act of kindness for another person. Mary Ann was going on a road trip to see her mom recently, and so she was going to be leaving the next morning and she had gone to bed, and I got to thinking, I wonder if she had a chance to fill up her car before she would leave the next day. And I went out and checked and the car was half empty and I thought, well, this will save her a little time. So I drove down the street and filled it up and brought it back in. So the next morning as she's taking off, she notices that her gas tank is filled up, and there's just something about, you thought about me, you cared for me, you did a little thing to bless me. That is the disinfectant, the oil, that makes the relationship run more smoothly and causes all of the toxins to begin to drain away. It's hard to be frustrated with or mad at somebody who is regularly being kind toward you.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, we have the same experience. When I go to the kitchen on a particular night and I'm washing off the dishes that are there and putting them in the dishwasher, and Shirley gets very kind and loving to me. It comes back and I smile and I say, "You're only loving me because I'm washing the dishes." But it really is true. It comes back to you. It pays dividends.

Bob Lepine: Mary Ann and I were at a Bible study years ago, and the question that we were being asked, all of us were sharing, was what was the last romantic thing your spouse did for you? And I was waiting with some anticipation to see how Mary Ann would answer that question. I was trying to think, when have I done anything romantic recently? Is she going to have to go back to when we were dating? And so it got to her and she said, "Well, the other night I was in doing the dishes, and without me saying anything, Bob got up and turned off the TV and came and started drying the dishes." And I looked at her and I said, "No, honey, they wanted something romantic I had done." And she said, "That was so romantic when you did that." Of course, now, anytime I pick up a dish towel, Mary Ann looks at me like, I know what you're thinking about here.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, let's go into the word humility, which is very prominently written in the Scripture.

Bob Lepine: Yeah. And the Bible says, "Love is not self-seeking. It does not seek its own." That's what humility is. Humility is this idea that we have the other person's good as our goal. I think a lot of people have a false idea about humility. They think it means that we are supposed to think less of ourselves, and it doesn't mean that at all. It means we're supposed to think of ourselves less, but instead of thinking of ourselves, we should be thinking of others. That's what Philippians 2 says. "Don't merely look out for your own interests, which you are naturally inclined to do, but also for the interests of others." That's the mind of Christ spoken of in Philippians 2, and that needs to be present in a marriage relationship.

Dr. James Dobson: Bob, I just looked at the clock. I can't believe it. Our time is gone. It's just fun talking to you about this very important subject. Let's close out the interview today and let's pick up with it in our next program. Would you be willing to do that?

Bob Lepine: That would be great. I'd love to do that. Thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: All right, let's summarize. The title of the book is *Love Like You Mean It*, and the subtitle is *The Heart of a Marriage That Honors God*. And we'll pick up right here next time. Bob, it's a pleasure talking to you. All those times when Dennis and Barbara have come to Family Talk or Focus on the Family, he didn't bring you with him and I don't understand that. It's fun talking to you.

Bob Lepine: This is a treat for me, so it's an honor and a delight to be on with you today.

Dr. James Dobson: Until tomorrow.

Roger Marsh: Well, what a great reminder. Have the mind of Christ in your marriage. Be sure to join us again tomorrow for part two of this powerful conversation, featuring our own Dr. James Dobson and his special guest, Bob Lepine, here on Family Talk. Communication is so important in relationships, especially in a marriage. From that frustrated glance to the tone in your voice when you talk, all of those expressions can convey so much. In James Chapter One, verse 19, we read, "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry." So if you and your spouse would like to grow closer in your relationship with God and each other, we have a special resource for you here for Valentine's Day here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. It's our 10-day marriage series. To take the challenge, all you have to do is visit drjamesdobson.org/10daymarriageseries.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and on behalf of the entire team here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we want to wish you and yours a very happy Valentine's Day. No matter where you are in life, single or married, remember that you are fiercely loved by God. You've been listening to Family Talk, and may God continue to richly bless you and your family as you grow deeper in your relationship with Him.

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