



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Happy 60th Anniversary, Jim and Shirley!

Guest(s): Shirley Dobson

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Dr. Dobson: Well, hello everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, which is a division of the James Dobson Family Institute. Today is a big day of celebration for Shirley and me. She's with me here in the studio today, and so I say, welcome Shirley. I'm glad you came in.

Shirley Dobson: Thanks, Jim. I'm so excited to celebrate this day with you.

Dr. Dobson: Well, let's tell everyone what we're celebrating today. Exactly 60 years ago tonight, a beautiful young bride and her fiancé stood side by side at the front of a church and pledged their lifelong love for one another. Shirley, that was six decades ago and it is amazing to see that we reached a milestone that we never really thought we would see.

Shirley Dobson: Well, I'll say to our listeners that longevity does not run in Jim Dobson's family. We are so grateful that the Lord has given us so many years together. In fact, I prayed years ago that we would reach our 50th wedding anniversary. The Lord not only gave us our 50th, but here we are at 60 and we are really blessed. We're even enjoying being sequestered at home during the pandemic. I found out Jim was a very good cook, but also a very messy one.

Dr. Dobson: Well, I resent that, Shirley. All I can tell you is that desperate people do desperate things. Speaking of longevity, Shirley's family is blessed by it. Her mother lived to be 97. My dad died at 66 and I never expected to live much longer than that, and here's why. There were five boys in my dad's family and every one of them died when they were relatively young, and all of them from the same cause, coronary artery disease. My grandmother died of it, she had a heart attack at 72. And my grandfather had an early stroke that took him. So this is my genetic heritage, and yet here I am. I had a heart attack in 1990, which was 30 years ago this week. But my cardiologist said my heart is functioning now like that of a young man who hasn't had a heart attack. So the Lord obviously intended for me to hang around for a while.

Shirley Dobson: And I'm so glad He did. Well, Jim, let's reminisce a little bit about our younger years.

Dr. Dobson: I hope we won't bore people with our story, but it is fun for us to talk about it, especially on this day. Let's go back to the beginning. Shirley and I met in college and we went together for three years and it was a storybook romance. I made her laugh and life was good. Everyone loved Shirley. She was voted most outstanding junior girl and then was elected senior-class president. That fourth year, she was also Homecoming Queen, and I was so proud of her.

Shirley Dobson: Well, let me tell you about Jim. I first noticed him buzzing around in his red convertible with a car load of squealing girls inside. It looked like they were having so much fun, they were giggling and laughing. And then I saw him playing tennis. He was captain of the tennis team, and I decided right there, I wanted to know more about this six foot, two inch blonde Texan. Now, I'm going to tell you something that may surprise you. I did something that was flat out illegal. I earned my tuition by putting mail in boxes every day. And of course, I kept a sharp eye out for who was writing whom. I noticed that this Dobson guy was corresponding with a girl from Germany. Well, I had to know who she was, and I also was very curious about what Jim was up to. So I took one of the German girl's letters back to my dorm and I steamed it open. Yes, steamed it open.

Dr. Dobson: Shame on you. Shame on you, Shirley.

Shirley Dobson: And it was a very interesting reading.

Dr. Dobson: Shirley was a little rascal at times. I figured out what she had done after we started dating and in retaliation, I stole one of her mom's letters out of her purse. Her name was Alma, and Alma told Shirley how to handle me and told her not to reveal her feelings too quickly. She was actually telling her to play it very cool, and I smiled while I read this advice. Our courtship was punctuated by that kind of intrigue and flirtatious games. And actually, I finally fell in love with this feisty little miss perfect.

Shirley Dobson: You know, Jim, my mother understood the rules of "love must be tough" before you wrote the book. Well, let's go on and talk about our wedding.

Dr. Dobson: Well, we were all so young and deep in love the night that we were married. My father performed the ceremony and he ended it with a beautiful prayer. My dad prayed always in the King James English, and you're going to notice that. This is what he said, "Oh, eternal God, we bring Thee our children, Jimmy and Shirley. They were Thine, but Thou in love didst lend them to us for a little season to care for, to love, and to cherish. And it's been a labor of love that has seemed but a few days because of the affection we bear them. Fresh from Thy hand they were in the morning of their lives, clean and upright and yet two separate personalities. Tonight, we give them back to Thee no longer as two, but as one flesh. May nothing short of death dissolve the union here submitted. And to this end, let the marvelous grace of God do its perfect work. It's also our earnest prayer for them, not that God shall have a part in their lives, but that He shall have the preeminent part.

Not that they shall possess faith, but that faith shall fully possess them both. That in a materialistic world, they shall not live for the earthly and temporal alone, but that they shall be enabled to lay hold of that which is spiritual and eternal. Amen." Then we stood at the altar and my dad said to me in his Texas draw, "Kiss her, Jim." And I did. And so began six decades of marital bliss, and that is no exaggeration, and it's still going strong today. Shirley, tell everyone what you remember about August 27th, 1960.

Shirley Dobson: Well, I remember how hot the church was because the air conditioning didn't work and the organist was 45 minutes late getting to the church, which made me very nervous. But I also remember how very much I loved you and how excited I was to be marrying you. And of course, I remember that sweet kiss. I just couldn't believe that the Lord let me marry Jim Dobson and to spend my life with him as his wife, and I still feel that way.

Dr. Dobson: That's all so very sweet, Shirley. After the wedding ceremony, we left for our honeymoon in a flurry of rice and best wishes. And then we drove to San Francisco. We came home a week later with a total of \$100 remaining between us, and that was it. There were no credit cards in those days. 100 bucks had to last for a full month. We had leased little apartment that had rented, corny, blonde furniture, I'll never forget it. The only piece that we owned was the stereo system and three records, and that tells you where our priorities were. Our apartment was very hot, so we had to spend a little money, went down and bought a \$12 fan to get us through the sweltering nights.

Shirley Dobson: And we ate a lot of hot dogs and chili for a month until we received our first paychecks. Both of us were new teachers and we knew if we could make it through October 1st, we'd be okay. I taught second grade and Jim taught sixth graders.

Dr. Dobson: The reason we started life together in such a financial hole is because we had to pay for all the expenses of the wedding ourselves because neither of our parents had any money, but there's another reason. Two weeks before getting married, we pooled our resources to make a down payment on a gleaming white, 1957 Ford. Three year old Ford. It was classy and it was also a necessity. The convertible that I had driven in college was a pile of junk. All through our courtship, Shirley hated that car and I had to do something drastic.

Shirley Dobson: I did hate that car. It often died on us and we had to push to get it started. It was humiliating. Other cars were flying past us, and we were sitting there waiting for a tow truck. It was kind of a joke on campus that most guys took their girlfriends out for a ride, but Jim Dobson took Shirley out for a push. Nothing worked on that car, the windows wouldn't go up in the winter and they wouldn't come down in the summer. But try to envision this. One day we were driving on the freeway about 60 miles an hour and the whole convertible top blew off, whoosh, and it stuck on something in the back and was flapping like Superman's cape. I was horrified.

Dr. Dobson: That really was one of my most embarrassing moments ever. I mean, how does a guy explain that? Driving down a freeway with this [inaudible 00:10:28]-

Shirley Dobson: Top.

Dr. Dobson: ... the freeway with the top of the car flapping along behind. One thing is certain, Shirley did not marry me for my car. So that's why we bought the Ford.

Shirley Dobson: But from that point on, everything seemed to fall in place for Jim professionally and academically. But I want to tell you that graduate school was a challenge for us both. Jim was working full-time, studying in the night, on the weekends, holidays. All our friends were buying furniture, and fixing up their apartments, and building families, and we were just working all the time. So like most wives of men in doctoral programs, I began to feel very lonely and really got down. There was no time for leisure, no time for fun. Jim knew that I was struggling, and one night he took me out for a date. Afterward, he parked the car and we had a long talk.

He told me that he was going to take a semester off from USC so we could spend time reconnecting as a husband and wife. I have to tell you personally, that is the kind of guy he is. He kept this commitment, even though it set him back perhaps a year. When I really needed him, he was always there for me. And I remember when we were engaged, I was talking to his aunt and she said, "Shirley, the Dobson make great family men." And that has certainly proven true.

Dr. Dobson: Even with the sacrifice, those were very meaningful days for us. Our first baby came along and we named her Danae Ann, and we loved her to pieces.

Shirley Dobson: Speaking of Danae, shortly after she was born, Jim came to me and said, "Shirley, I think you need a day off." Boy, did I. "Take this Saturday to shop or do whatever you want, and I'll take care of Danae." I thought that was so sweet and so thoughtful, so I did that. I was gone all day shopping. And when I came home, I came in the back door of the kitchen. There was no Jim, there was no baby. So I went down the hall to the nursery. And when I got to the door, I was hit by a very familiar smell. I looked around the corner, here was this big tall guy leaning over the crib, gently changing Danae's diaper. I was just so filled with love and appreciation for him. It was so sweet, and I said, "Jim, I'm home." And he wheeled around. I couldn't believe it. He had two huge cotton balls stuck up in his nostrils. I just about passed out on the floor laughing, it was so funny.

Dr. Dobson: I just never got used to cleaning up what we call "the big job." I did not want to deal with that, but I made up for it in other ways. Shirley was in her fifth year of teaching and Danae was a toddler, and I would take her to preschool three times a week on my way to the hospital. One day, we got there and I walked Danae to the door. And when we got to the door, she began crying. She was not really crying, she was sobbing. She's wailing and just saying, "Please, daddy.

Please, I don't want to go. Take me with you, I don't want to go. Please, daddy." And I didn't know what had happened there, but I could imagine what might've gone wrong. I'm not sure today what took place, but all I knew is I wanted to get her out of there. So I walked her to the car. I put her in the seat and I went around the other side and got on my side of the car. Danae thought I was going to scold her.

I pointed my finger at her and I said, "Danae, you will never have to go to that place again." And she never did. In fact, we got home that night and we began talking about our circumstances, and we both decided that Shirley wanted and should be a stay-at-home mom. But we didn't have the money to make it possible. So we talked it over, we did our budgets. We had two Volkswagens at that time, so we sold one of them and that money allowed us to make it until I got a little higher salary at the university. That was a very important turning point for us.

Shirley Dobson: You know, Jim, that was the best decision we ever made.

Dr. Dobson: I think it was.

Shirley Dobson: And then as we decided that I would be a stay-at-home mom, we started talking about having another baby. Do you remember? We tried unsuccessfully for five years and went through all the usual infertility treatments. We finally decided that we were going to adopt a baby. And within three months, the social worker called and said, "We have a little boy for you." Well, we named him James Ryan, and he brought much joy and electricity to our family.

Dr. Dobson: That turned out to be one of the most significant days of my life because not only did we adopt Ryan, but that very day in the mail came the first copy of my book for families, *Dare to Discipline*. Along with it, a couple of days later came 250 copies that the publisher sent to me and asked me to autograph them and send them to my influential friends. So that took me several days to do, but I autographed them all. Then we put them in padded envelopes and we addressed them, and stamped them, and put return addresses on them. It made a big pile in the center of the family room. So Shirley and I knelt down and put our hands on that pile of books, both of us. And then I prayed a prayer of dedication for those books. I said, "Lord, put Your blessing on this project. It belongs to You.

The content here came from Your Word, and families need help in knowing how to discipline their children. We just dedicate this book to Your cause." Then we carried them all to our remaining Volkswagen and took them to the post office. That was 1970, 50 years last week, to the day. That was the first of 70 more books to come, and I'm working on another one today.

Shirley Dobson: Jim, that book is still in the bookstores today. Well, I remember after that, there was a huge change that occurred in our lives. After 17 years at Children's

Hospital and USC School of Medicine, Jim came home one day and said he felt the Lord leading him to resign from academia. What a shock. I asked him if he was really sure that this was the right thing to do, he said it was time to start a radio ministry to families. Well, I had learned through the years to trust Jim's judgment, so I was okay with it.

Dr. Dobson: Let me tell everyone what was going on with me at that time. I had become increasingly concerned about the institution the family, because it was falling apart and I felt I ought to do something to try to save it. I said goodbye to my medical colleagues and I opened little two room office, and I called it Focus on the Family, which a three year old later called "Poke us in the Fanny." I began broadcasting in March, 1977 on 34 radio outlets, and the response to it was overwhelming. Focus on the Family grew exponentially until it was eventually carried by 7,000 stations in 150 countries, and we were heard by more than 220 million people. I stayed at Focus on the Family for 33 years before being asked to leave by the board. That's another story. But the next day after leaving, I started Family Talk. One more thing, many of you know this. But in 1991, when the kids were grown, Shirley accepted the position as Chairman of the National Day of Prayer, and continued leading it for 25 years. And she did a great job with it.

Shirley Dobson: Thanks Jim. Well, it has been very nostalgic to relive some highlights of these past 60 years and to recall how the Lord has had His hands on us year by year. It hasn't been without bumps along the way, including some life-threatening illnesses. But we have loved taking this journey together, haven't we?

Dr. Dobson: Yes. And our time has gone and I'll close with this. There was no chance of Shirley and me getting to know each other. I was born to a struggling pastor and his wife in Shreveport, Louisiana. That was 2,000 miles from where Shirley lived in Southern California. Her father had a serious drinking problem, and he had squandered his paycheck at a bar every weekend. The Lord had to do a miracle to get us together, but He is in that business as you know. When I was four, I walked down an aisle in my dad's Nazarene church on a Sunday night and I gave my heart to Jesus. My dad came off the platform and put his arm around me and prayed, and I cried like the baby I was. It was no casual thing for me, it would shape my entire life.

Shirley Dobson: And I was in far away Torrens, California, where my mom knew she needed help raising my brother and me, especially after the breakup of her marriage. So she sent us to a little Nazarene church, even though she didn't attend. And one night after hearing the pastor talk about Jesus, I stepped into the aisle all alone and walked to the front of the church. I was six years old. This is very touching, even today. I was six years old when I knelt at the altar and dedicated my life to Him. That was and is a precious memory for me because it gave me an anchor to hold me steady through the storms of life. And a few years later, I knelt beside my little bed and I asked the Lord to answer two prayers for me. First, I asked Him to send us a good and loving father. He soon sent a never married angel by

the name of Joe Kubishta. Because of him, my brother and I were able to go to college.

Second, I asked the Lord to give me a godly husband and a Christian home when it was time to marry. The Lord must have said, "I think I have someone in mind, but he lives in Texas. Now, let's see. How can I get this done? Oh, I know, I'll send them both to the same Christian college."

Dr. Dobson: After finishing high school and still living 1,000 miles apart, Shirley and I both attended Pasadena Nazarene college in California and, bingo, mission accomplished. Here we are 60 years later, thanking God for His tender mercies. Our parents, Joe and Alma Kubishta, and Jimmy and Myrtle Dobson are all in heaven now awaiting our arrival on the other side.

Shirley Dobson: Jim, let me add one final thought, okay? When I consider my dysfunctional family and the turmoil of those early years, I am amazed by what our heavenly Father has done in my life. Jim and I were reading the Bible together just a few days ago and we came across 2 Samuel 7:18, which reads, "Then King David went in and sat before the Lord. And he said, 'Who am I? Oh, Sovereign Lord. And what is my family that You have brought me this far?'" That really touches my heart because that's my story. Who am I? Oh, Sovereign Lord. And what is my family that You have brought me this far? That is precisely how I feel this day.

Dr. Dobson: Happy anniversary, Shirley Deere Dobson.

Shirley Dobson: Happy anniversary to you, James Clayton Dobson.

Dr. Dobson: And thank You, Lord, for Your incomparable blessings on our lives.

Shirley Dobson: Amen and amen.

Dr. Dobson: And thank you all our listeners for joining us today, and I'll see you tomorrow.

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

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