



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Loneliness in Marriage – Part 2

**Guest(s):** Dennis and Barbara Rainey

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**Dr. Dobson:** Hello, everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, a radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and thank you for joining us for this program.

**Roger Marsh:** As we begin today's broadcast, I have a question for husbands and wives alike. Here's the question: Do you feel like a wedge is being driven between you and your spouse? It's become all too normal in this society to mock or cheapen or undermine the sacred institution. There's just so much against married couples today, whether it's negative messages from TV and film or just the busyness of our hectic schedules. Well, despite all that, here at Family Talk, we want to help strengthen your marriage and your parenting relationships, too. To that end, today we're going to hear the conclusion of a timeless conversation about loneliness in marriage. Once again, Dr. James Dobson is joined by prominent authors and speakers, Dennis and Barbara Rainey. They led the ministry FamilyLife for nearly 50 years before transitioning out of that role in 2018. Without any further delay, let's dive back into today's broadcast material. Here once again is Dr. Dobson.

**Dr. Dobson:** You said last time, Dennis, that life naturally takes you away from one another.

**Dennis Rainey:** It does. Isolation-

**Dr. Dobson:** And unless you do something to change it, it will drive a wedge between you.

**Dennis Rainey:** Isolation naturally occurs in every marriage relationship. It occurs in every relationship. With a teenager, a parent to a child, with our parents, our adult parents, but it really occurs during suffering, because if you don't have a plan to move through those periods of suffering together as partners, then at that point, you do begin to see those wedges begin to be driven in your relationship.

**Barbara Rainey:** Mm-hmm (affirmative). I think that as Christians today, we need to take more responsibility for other couples who are going through difficult times and not sit back and assume that they're handling things well and not sit back and be removed. I think we need to be more involved with people and encourage that oneness and encourage them to work things through, because it is tough.

Dennis Rainey: I think Barbara is really on target here because the thing in the Christian community today is we sometimes take a hands-off approach to somebody, not knowing how to relate to them when they go through some difficult time. We want to come up and read a scripture verse to them and read something to them as they go through suffering, but we don't know how to relate to them on an ongoing basis. And I think that's where this mystical thing called the Body of Christ, the Church, is so vital to a couple who are going through, as Barbara mentioned, the loss of a job, financial setbacks, difficulty, or illness. Somebody to help cause that bonding to continue rather than the isolation and that drift to begin to occur in that marriage relationship.

Dr. Dobson: Dennis, you threw out a word a minute ago that I want to come back to, because there was some hope wrapped around that word. I heard the word "plan." That you have a strategy for helping to bring lonely husbands, lonely wives, together. How do you go about that? What's the plan?

Dennis Rainey: Well, Psalm 127:1 gives us the great promise, and really a command as well, "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it."

Dr. Dobson: "They labor in vain who build it."

Dennis Rainey: And that means there has to be a set of blueprints that you build your home from that are the Lord's blueprints, God's blueprints, the scripture. The problem as I see it after working with thousands of engaged couples and literally hundreds of thousands of marriages as well is that most couples today are getting married, the man with a set of blueprints, the woman with a set of blueprints, and their blueprints overlap a bit. You know what I mean?

Dr. Dobson: Ah, yeah.

Dennis Rainey: But they're not the same set. Now, what would happen, Jim, if you and Shirley tried to build a house off of two different sets of blueprints with two different architects and two different builders?

Dr. Dobson: Have two different houses, that's what you'd have.

Dennis Rainey: You would have some strange looking structures, wouldn't you, if every house was built like that? Well, it's no wonder we have some strange looking marriages. I really brought this down to a practical illustration with my sixth grade Sunday school class the other Sunday, when I formed them in three different groups. And to each group, I gave a jigsaw puzzle. To the first group, I gave a jigsaw puzzle that had the right pieces and the right box top. To the second group of sixth graders, I gave the wrong box top and a jigsaw puzzle contents, a 1000-piece puzzle. And to the third group, I walked up to them with a kid's shoe box, Jim, that had no top or no lid but just 1000 pieces of puzzle. Probably, if the truth were known, it was several different puzzles from our family, and dumped it out in their midst.

And then I said, "Now, for the next eight minutes, I want everybody in this group," and they were about 15 kids in each group, "I want you to put this puzzle together, and there's only one rule. No talking." So they began to go to work. The first group who had the right box top set their box top up, and they immediately begin to get the edges and the corners and put the pieces together. The second group started to do that, too, but they began to look after a couple of minutes at that box stop with kind of askance. They could tell something was not right. And the third group almost from the very beginning began to lose heart for their puzzle, because they had no lid, they had no model.

Dr. Dobson: The third group finally turned over the table of the first group.

Dennis Rainey: Well, one kid did nearly go after me in the second group. He raised his hand, and I said, "No talking, no talking." But he kept holding his hand up. I thought he needed to go to the restroom, so I said, "Okay, you can whisper."

He said, "Mr. Rainey, you switched the lids. You gave us the wrong box top."

And I said, "No talking."

Dr. Dobson: Uh-huh (affirmative).

Dennis Rainey: And I let them continue on for a few minutes. And then I told them what I had done. Well, it was interesting. The first group had made great progress. There was still frustration, because the pieces didn't always fit together perfectly and they had to work together. But the second group had really become frustrated and angry at one another. But the third group was the most interesting because they had no lid, they had no model, no picture. There were kids lying on their back tossing the pieces of the puzzle in the air like Frisbees, and they had completely lost hope for putting that puzzle together. And I thought, "Isn't this a great illustration of what takes place in marriages today, who don't have God as their architect and His blueprints."

Dr. Dobson: Yeah.

Dennis Rainey: People who have the wrong plan and don't know it or have no plan at all, there is no hope. They lose hope for that relationship, and that's what we've tried to do in this book.

Dr. Dobson: Ah, that's a good illustration. Dennis, let me extrapolate from that illustration. I find that many men come into marriage with a portion of the biblical plan, and women come in with another portion of the biblical plan, and they don't see the whole picture. Let me give you an example. A man comes into marriage knowing that a woman is supposed to be his helpmeet. She is supposed to fit in with his plans. She is supposed to love and respect him. See, I mean, he's got it all figured out, what she's supposed to do. And, essentially, she is going to be an adjunct to his personality and his plans in life. And she's going to come alongside

and take care of his children and pump up his ego and meet his needs and feed him and meet his sexual needs and all those kinds of things. The Bible says it.

Dennis Rainey:

Right.

Dr. Dobson:

All right? She comes into marriage, and she sees that this man in the Bible is supposed to cherish her and care for her and love her and protect her and provide for her. And she sees all these things he's supposed to do, but she's not reading her part of the blueprint.

Dennis Rainey:

Exactly.

Dr. Dobson:

We're very good at seeing the blueprint for the other person.

Dennis Rainey:

We really are.

Dr. Dobson:

And sometimes not so good at reading our own blueprints.

Barbara Rainey:

That's right.

Dennis Rainey:

At our FamilyLife conferences, we really have found this to be true because a lot of men come to those conferences. You can see the heel marks in the carpet outside.

Dr. Dobson:

Sliding all the way in.

Dennis Rainey:

All way in. Then on Sunday morning, we speak to those men directly about what it means to be a leader of the home. You know what we start with? Just what you talked about. What we talk about what really is the accurate job description for the wife, because a lot of men expect their wives to be doormats, and that's not right.

Dr. Dobson:

And it's not biblical.

Dennis Rainey:

No, it's not. And the second thing we begin to share with them is how to be a servant leader, how to give your life away as the leader of your home, which I think the scripture teaches us as men. I'll never forget my first year of marriage. In fact, it wasn't just in my first year of marriage that I learned. I continue to learn it today, that a man can't lead his home and be selfish simultaneously. It just can't be done in the biblical sense of the word. And Jesus said that if a man wants to be great, he needs to be a slave of all. You don't expect people to serve you. And today we've got some incredibly fuzzy thinking on this area of men and women's roles and responsibilities, because-

Dr. Dobson:

How that really break out? What's that mean in everyday life? I mean, a guy's got this business to run, and it's all in the wide world he can handle. And he's huffing and puffing, trying to get it all done. And there's hardly enough money

to go around because business is new and it's undercapitalized, and he's working so hard to get it done. What else does God expect of him?

Dennis Rainey: That's a fair question, and I want Barbara to comment on it in a second, but I think it practically speaking comes down for a man to begin to give up some of the things he would consider his rights or his toys, like fishing, like TV in the evening, like his newspaper.

Dr. Dobson: Now, you've gone to meddling.

Dennis Rainey: Yeah, right.

Dr. Dobson: Let's don't kick it over to the Lakers, for Pete's sake, right?

Dennis Rainey: But begin to give those up to make a statement to his wife. And I did a lot of things wrong in the first years of our marriage, but occasionally I did something right. And one of the things I did right was I gave up fishing for a number of years, even though I love to do it, and hunting, to let Barbara know that I did care enough about her and her needs, that I was willing to deny myself for her.

Dr. Dobson: Barbara, what'd you give up?

Barbara Rainey: Well, over the years, I gave up a lot of things, primarily because of our children, is the reason I've had to give up a lot of things, too. But I think on the wife's side, she needs to realize how important it is for that husband of hers for her to believe in him and be supportive of him. And I think too many women expect their husbands, their Christian husbands, to be Superman and to be perfect and to not ever make mistakes. And I think a lot of wives today, Christian wives, are holding too high of a standard for their men. They're expecting their husbands to be great spiritual leaders, and they've got their own little definition of what that means. "He's going to lead me in prayer and he's going to lead me in a Bible study and he's going to do these things with the children."

And the poor man probably has never had a model for that. He probably didn't have that kind of a background when he grew up, or he's never seen anyone else do it. And I think too many wives are expecting too much from their husbands. And, therefore, they're becoming critical of what this husband is not doing, and they're not being thankful and grateful for the things he is doing.

Dr. Dobson: Right. That is so good.

Dennis Rainey: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Dobson: That's so good. I know that women listening to us do not want to hear that, because they are frustrated, and their needs are not being met.

Barbara Rainey: I know it.

Dr. Dobson: And they don't want to hear you say it. And they particularly don't want to hear me say it as a man. But I think it needs to be said that in the Church, it is awfully easy to beat up men. I mean, they're just standing there, and they'll take it. And you can just climb all over them. But it's a two-sided thing.

Barbara Rainey: Yeah, it really is.

Dr. Dobson: And both sides are imperfect, and we both need the scripture and we both need to be unselfish. Right, Dennis?

Barbara Rainey: That's right.

Dennis Rainey: There was a guy that, I can still remember this picture, after the FamilyLife conference in a city on the East Coast came up to me. It was at the end of the conference, and his wife was sitting on the edge of the podium. And her head was down, but she wasn't weeping yet. And the man came up, and I knew he was not a Christian. And they'd come to the conference at the request of a nephew who had sent them as an anniversary gift, I believe it was. And I asked him. I said, "What did you get out of the weekend?"

And here was this guy. I believe he was an engineer of sorts there in the Washington, D.C. area. He looked back at me and he looked at the floor and he looked at his wife for a second and he looked back at me. And he was fumbling for words, because he was a very unexpressive man. He said, "Well, I guess I realized that for the first time in 31 years, I needed to tell my wife that I needed her and I loved her."

Dr. Dobson: Never occurred to him before.

Dennis Rainey: Never had occurred to the guy. And I looked over at his wife. Now the Kleenex was out, and the tears were just streaming down her cheeks. And I thought, "He may not become a Christian this weekend yet, but it sure was planted. He heard the truth that weekend." But he came to the realization that he needed that woman. And I felt sad for her and sad for him that 31 years had elapsed. I think they had had children and hadn't been away for 26 of those years alone by themselves, away from the kids. And their lives had been built around those kids and his work. And he didn't realize his needs, back to what Barbara was talking about there.

Dr. Dobson: And it's what we talked about last time. *Lonely Husbands, Lonely Wives*. The wife is often aware that she's lonely. The husband is-

Dennis Rainey: Is not.

Dr. Dobson: ... often unaware.

Dennis Rainey: Right.

Barbara Rainey: Right.

Dr. Dobson: He papers it over with hard work and loses himself in whatever his business pursuit is and doesn't know that there's an emptiness inside. Is afraid to look at it, perhaps.

Dennis Rainey: Right. It's one of the reasons I think men are driven today. I think a lot of men are driven to success in the business community or even in, Jim, in the ministry.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah.

Dennis Rainey: They're covering over an inadequacy to know and to be known over performance, and they can't drop their guard to let that other person inside.

Dr. Dobson: Let's get personal, Dennis. Do you ever feel lonely?

Dennis Rainey: You bet. And-

Dr. Dobson: Is this something the two of you have experienced at times in your relationship?

Dennis Rainey: This book has been a continual process of our marriage. I mean, we have had to fight isolation tooth and nail. I really believe, biblically speaking, if you'll allow me to become just for a moment a theologian here, that the issue of oneness and isolation is one of the most critical issues of life. If you'll remember, in John Chapter 17, Jesus prayed what? That we might be what? "One, even as you and I, Father, are one."

So if God in the Person of Christ is praying for Christians to be one today, what do you think the enemy is trying to do?

Dr. Dobson: Mm. Drive you apart.

Dennis Rainey: He's trying to drive wedges between us, and I think for Barbara and I, we have sensed this. And it was tough writing the book. I felt the enemy's voice. "Don't share that. Get angry at her. Be bitter. Exclude her. Don't share that with her. Get angry with her because she's not helping you on this part because she's caring for the kids right now." But those are lies.

Dr. Dobson: You have used several times the word "oneness." I think you need to define it. You're using that synonymous with intimacy. I'm convinced that when people get married, especially women, even more so than men, they've thought it out. The men feel it but haven't thought about it. What they most want in that relationship is intimacy. Now, what does that mean? That means soul to soul and heart to heart. It means more than business partnerships or just living together. It means your hearts beat as one. You feel for one another. You care for one another. You're into each other's needs, into each other's feelings, into

each other's hearts. It's a melting together. It's one flesh. It's intimacy. That's what you mean by oneness.

Barbara Rainey: Right.

Dennis Rainey: Yes. Yes. It's-

Barbara Rainey: Exactly.

Dr. Dobson: And it is so difficult to achieve. I don't believe one marriage in 10 achieves it. And sometimes even those who do for a short period of time, lose it. It is so difficult to capture that because everything in society mitigates against it. The pressures in which we live and the physical problems, Barbara, that come into our lives. And our children and their needs. That's all encompassing. How do you have time to think about one another and what you're experiencing as a husband and wife when you're totally preoccupied elsewhere? And yet that's what God offers to us through the scripture.

Dennis Rainey: It is.

Barbara Rainey: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Dobson: That's what marriage was intended to be.

Dennis Rainey: It was. And in the garden, it's interesting. It said that man was alone. Now, he was in perfection. He was with God. There was no sin. There was no barriers.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah. No TV.

Dennis Rainey: But says this is not-

Dr. Dobson: No mother-in-laws.

Dennis Rainey: That's right.

Dr. Dobson: No financial problems.

Dennis Rainey: Yeah, and it is not good that-

Dr. Dobson: No freeways.

Dennis Rainey: Yeah, it is not good that man be alone.

Dr. Dobson: You know what fascinates me about that is that Adam had God himself to fellowship with in the cool of the day.

Dennis Rainey: Right.



Dr. Dobson: And God said, "It is not good."

Dennis Rainey: It's not good.

Barbara Rainey: Mm.

Dr. Dobson: Isn't that amazing?

Barbara Rainey: Uh-huh (affirmative).

Dr. Dobson: He made us so emotionally needy that even fellowship with God was insufficient. Boy, I'll get the mail on that one.

Dennis Rainey: No.

Dr. Dobson: But that's why He gave Adam Eve, because he needed something else.

Dennis Rainey: Well, God who said it, Jim. It wasn't you.

Dr. Dobson: Oh, I know.

Dennis Rainey: I mean, we make the same statement at our conferences.

Dr. Dobson: Believe me, I'll get criticized.

Dennis Rainey: But there is that element out there that says, "All I need is God. I don't need anybody else." Well, you got to look at Genesis Chapter Two and realize that we do need each other. And it's interesting: That's why we get married, to defeat that aloneness.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah.

Dennis Rainey: And yet the closer two imperfect people get with one another, what happens? The more you see each other's imperfections. And so that is what's so distinctive and so hopeful about Christian marriage. How two people in their imperfection can live close up, know and be known, and yet not reject one another. That's what we celebrate from the scriptures, as far as what really is Christian marriage today.

Dr. Dobson: That's what amazes me about my relationship with Shirley. She knows incredible flaws about me and loves me, anyway.

Dennis Rainey: Right.

Dr. Dobson: It's hard to believe.

Dennis Rainey: Isn't there a great peace about that? Don't you just feel relaxed?

Dr. Dobson: Oh, sure. I don't have to prove it.

Dennis Rainey: Right. In so much of life, we're having to prove it as men and to perform out there. But I think that this God we've been speaking of is the key to achieving this oneness. Unless you're one with Him... You see, when Christ stepped out of eternity, He broke the barriers down between God and man by dying on the cross for our sins.

Dr. Dobson: Ah.

Dennis Rainey: And that allowed us to achieve oneness with God, if we'll receive the gift of eternal life through Christ. But that gift has to be received first before you can turn to another human being and express acceptance and love for that other person.

Dr. Dobson: Mm-hmm (affirmative). It's a natural outgrowth, one to the other.

Dennis Rainey: I got a story that I'd like to tell you from a law officer in San Jose, a letter that he wrote me, who watched a marriage break up. He actually called the letter "The Death of a Marriage." And this is a policeman who has been used to impact thousands of marriages in the San Francisco Bay Area. But he told the story of this husband and wife. He pulled into the front yard of watching this husband and wife tear at each other while their two children watched on. And they were arguing about who got the VCR and who got the car and who got these bags and all that.

And I want to read to you, Jim, just the end of his letter, because here's what he says. He says, "Then I watched in unbelief as the husband pointed to the two little girls standing in the doorway and said, 'Well, which one do you want?' And with no apparent emotion, the mother chose the older one. The girls looked at each other, and then the older daughter walked out and climbed into the car. The smaller girl, still clutching her Cabbage Patch Doll in one hand and her suitcase in the other, watched in bewilderment as her sister and mother drove off. I saw tears streaming down her face. The only comfort she received was an order from her dad to go into the house as he turned to talk to some friends."

Dr. Dobson: Oh, that's incredible. And the research shows, you all know this, that those children are not better off five years after that happens.

Dennis Rainey: Absolutely not.

Dr. Dobson: They are still struggling with it.

Dennis Rainey: It sends earthquakes through their little souls, and it causes mistrust. It causes questions of my value. "Did I cause that breakup of that marriage?" And here we see the result of isolation occurring in the case of a legal divorce, but how

much more do we see it occurring today, Jim, in emotional divorces that are allowed to occur in marriages that never ever get divorced legally?

- Dr. Dobson: For that reason, we really must address, Dennis and Barbara, the person who's listening to us who has heard in these descriptions their own situation. It's either a lonely husband or lonely wife, and they don't have the hope for intimacy. We must encourage them to not seek the easy way out.
- Dennis Rainey: Yes.
- Barbara Rainey: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Dennis Rainey: Absolutely.
- Dr. Dobson: The simple solution.
- Barbara Rainey: Right.
- Dr. Dobson: Because that's not the answer.
- Dennis Rainey: It isn't.
- Dr. Dobson: It only appears to be the easy way out. In the long run, divorce is painful for everybody. It is devastating. That's not what we're suggesting. We're saying God can help you build what you haven't had.
- Barbara Rainey: That's right.
- Dennis Rainey: Because the tomb is empty, Christ is alive from the dead, and He can bring hope even to the most devastated relationship out there. But there are some tips, though, that I would give the person who finds herself or himself in that situation, even as we talk.
- Dr. Dobson: Hit them very quickly.
- Dennis Rainey: Okay. Number one, cultivate your own relationship with God. He is the one who will not disappoint when it's all said and done. Number two, find a godly friend who can help meet some of your needs and take counsel in, preferably and most certainly of the same sex, who can give you godly, wise counsel. Not someone who'll tell you to bail out of that relationship but someone who'll tell you to hang in there when the going is tough. And then, third, take an inventory of the relationship and see what you can do to make that relationship work. You can't control your mate's response to you. What you can control is what you give to that relationship.
- Dr. Dobson: Mm-hmm (affirmative). That's good. That's three. You've got more in your book. There's a whole list of them.

Barbara Rainey: That's right.

Dennis Rainey: And don't move toward divorce.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah.

Dennis Rainey: I just applaud your stand of wanting to make marriages work, Jim, as you use the radio to strengthen marriages around the country. We've got to make marriages succeed. The next generation depends on it.

Dr. Dobson: I'd like to issue a warning to people who do find themselves in this book, *Lonely Husbands, Lonely Wives*, that you may not realize just how vulnerable you are to an affair when you're in that particular mode, because Satan can really make use of that. Even when you hadn't intended it, he'll send somebody into your life at just the right time who will appear to meet these needs. And don't take the bait.

Dennis Rainey: Absolutely.

Barbara Rainey: That's right.

Dr. Dobson: That is a disaster. Barbara, we're about out of time. What did you hope to accomplish with this book? If you just take the bottom line, there's a lot of work in here, why'd you write it? What did you want to get done?

Barbara Rainey: Well, I would say far and away above everything else is to create hope, which is what we were just talking about, because I think there are so many marriages, so many individuals who feel discouraged and who feel lonely and who feel that there is no hope for their relationship. And yet we know that God has hope for those relationships. And even if that marriage never becomes what you envisioned it to be when you got married in the first place, there is hope that God can give you peace, God can give you some degree of success in your relationship if you will hang in there and pray and depend on Him. And I think we live in a nation that is desperate for hope for our marriages and for our families, for our children. And our children need to see some marriages work. So, more than anything, I really see a great need for hope.

Dr. Dobson: But you'll never get perfection out of that mate.

Barbara Rainey: No. Never.

Dr. Dobson: Nor will he or she get perfection out of you.

Barbara Rainey: And to expect it is to invite failure and disappointment.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah.

Dennis Rainey: Hmm.

Roger Marsh: And that's a great point to end this informative two-part conversation here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Visit today's broadcast page at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). For more information about the Raineys, their ministry, FamilyLife, or their book, *Staying Close*. Once you're there, you can also request a physical copy of this interview to revisit later. Simply tap on the order a CD button, and a polished broadcast CD will be sent right to your home. Find all this information and more when you visit the broadcast page at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). Well, that's all the time we have for today. Be sure to tune in again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks for listening.

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

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