



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Confronting Guilt in Motherhood – Part 3

**Guest(s):** Julie Barnhill

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**Dr. James Dobson:** Well, hello, everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

**Roger Marsh:** Welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. If you've been with us over the past couple of days, you know we've been talking about a very important subject, parental guilt and how to overcome it. Parents often ask themselves this question many times as their children grow, and the question is, "Am I doing all the right things to get my child ready for adulthood?" It can feel like guilt comes from everywhere with regard to whether or not we're doing those right things. Over the last two days here on Family Talk, we've been listening to our own Dr. James Dobson and his special guest, Julie Barnhill as they discussed this subject.

Julie is an author, a speaker and a mother of three grown children. As a mom, she has been helping us distinguish between different types of guilt and has shared some personal stories of her own shortcomings and how she has dealt with them. Remember, there is redemption with God's forgiveness and that is available to all of us. Now on today's program, we're going to hear from a panel of moms about the topic of mom guilt. So let's join our guest panel along with Mrs. Julie Barnhill and our own Dr. James Dobson right here on Family Talk.

**Speaker 3:** I've got three young children under four, or four and under, and I'm wondering, are you supposed to always have this ooey gooey I love you feeling?

**Dr. James Dobson:** That is a new way to put it, but we know what she means. Don't we?

**Speaker 3:** Well, I don't-

**Dr. James Dobson:** Ooey gooey.

**Speaker 3:** Ooey gooey.

**Dr. James Dobson:** How do you spell that?

Julie Barnhill: Yes. I don't believe so. I think part of that's that expectation, isn't it? That you wake up and your little miss sunshine and everything smells good and everything's clean in the house. No, I don't think that ooey goeey feeling is always there. It's that practicality of what has to get done and what needs to be done. But I think what I would wish for you, pray for you and that the goal is that there is that delight in your children, just that sense of, "This is good, this is good. Even when there's spit up on my shoulder." I mean, does your shoulder smell like anything but spit up for the past four years? And I think that's the place we want to get to. What do you think Dr. Dobson?

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I think you're absolutely right that emotions never stay in an exhilarated state for very long. I worry about people who come to know Christ for the first time and they are so thrilled and excited and feel clean for the first time, and that relationship with Christ is like a honeymoon. I wish I could talk to those people and say, "You will not always feel this way because emotions have a way of being cyclical, and there will come a time when if you just based it on your feelings, you would say, "I don't think God caress about me or that He's there." You remain stable regardless of how you feel because it is not dependent upon an emotion. It's dependent upon God's word and what he has told us and what we know to be true."

"And if you are blown back and forth by the winds of change, by the emotions that you feel, you are going to be in a great deal of difficulty all the time," and it's true of parenting too. There are times when you think the greatest privilege in your entire life is raising these kids. There are other times when for every parent it gets tough. It's flat out hard when you've got three under four-

Julie Barnhill: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: ... that she has, my goodness, why would she be exhilarated all the time?

Julie Barnhill: She's tired.

Dr. James Dobson: She's changing diapers like crazy.

Julie Barnhill: You know-

Dr. James Dobson: But it's okay.

Julie Barnhill: ... absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: She doesn't have to be ooey goeey all the time.

Julie Barnhill: I love that. I love how you brought out that honeymoon part because I've read that when you're attracted to someone, there's that initial 18 month period when you're attracted to them and you have all the ooey goeey feelings for one

another, and then that goes away. That chemical leaves your brain and you get down to the practicalities.

Dr. James Dobson: In my relationship with Shirley, in our keep file, we have this wonderful keep file. I wrote her a note on our eighth anniversary and I can't quote it, but I said something to the effect that there are times when the feeling of love and closeness between us is all encompassing. I can get tears in my eyes thinking about it. There are other times when you're really kind of upset at each other, you don't feel a lot that's positive. But in between, there are times of apathy where neither is true. I love you regardless of where I am in that cycle because I am committed to you for life. I am thankful for who you are in my life. This is one of those days when it is just ordinary, and that's okay. And I'm in love with you today on our eighth anniversary. It was a brilliant piece.

Julie Barnhill: It should be published. Well, one of the things I'm thinking about too, this is really where the Titus Woman comes in, where that older woman does come in. And I can remember the first year when I finally got it when it said to teach the younger women how to love their husbands and love their children, and I never knew someone would have to help teach me that. I thought that just happened, but you have to be taught that. So I'd encourage her to have those women in her life that are helping her get there.

Dr. James Dobson: Okay, next question.

Louise: Well, first, Julie asked what we did right? I just wanted to let you know that I did not freak out when my son's electricity science experiment blasted the chrome off the kitchen faucet. I was very glad that he didn't kill himself, so I did not freak out. My name is Louise and I'm from Colorado. And I'll preface my question with over 15 years ago, I was unable to protect my young son from the internet pornography. When I realized the danger it presented to my son, I disconnected the internet from our home. As a young man now he struggles with remaining pure. He helps himself by not having the internet in his own home and he surrounds himself by Christian friends, but I still feel supremely guilty for not having protected him all those years ago.

Dr. James Dobson: Could you have done it?

Louise: At the time-

Dr. James Dobson: Did you have enough information to know that something was going awry?

Louise: ... no, not then.

Dr. James Dobson: How can you blame yourself?

Louise: Because I'm the mom. I'm supposed to know everything.

Dr. James Dobson.: See, Julie, that's it, isn't it?

Julie Barnhill: It is.

Dr. James Dobson.: "I'm the mom."

Julie Barnhill: And you said it and she said it. I mean, that's one of those when we're talking about guilt and how we think through this, if we say, "Given the circumstances, given what I knew at the time, could I have done anything differently?" And actually to me, Louise, there should be just a freedom right in this moment for her that she couldn't have done differently. I mean, she was doing everything she could at the time. And you speak to this, I mean, this is one of your passions because you know the-

Dr. James Dobson: It is because in some ways we live in Sodom and Gomorrah. It's not quite that bad, but the Entertainment industry and Hollywood, and some things that are on television and especially the things that are on the internet are just about that wicked. In fact, the scripture says in the last days it will be as it was in the days of Noah. So if we're not there now, it's coming. And if you live in Sodom and Gomorrah, it might be very difficult to get them out and they are influenced by it. And so that's a sad reality here in this culture that we have this influence that is everywhere. So you disconnect the internet and so you get every damnable influence out, and they go to the next door neighbor or they go to the local library where they can see it there, or they hear it at school or in some way they go behind your back. And it just breaks my heart that the culture is often at war with parents. And then when you fail at that, "You are the mom. It's your fault."

Julie Barnhill: You, this Scripture has just come to mean so much more to me over the few years with teenagers, and it's the Scripture where it says, "Let everyone work out their own salvation with fear and trembling." And it's been very difficult to hand, because I hear elements of control here, good control. That's what it's called good control. But we really think and we should control all of that and we can't. And now her son, he's going to have to work it out with fear and trembling and, perhaps, Louise at this point steps up. And I really believe in that power of speaking truth.

Now, I'm not talking ooga booga stuff, any magic and mystical type thing with this. What I mean is that speaking the truth of the Scripture to whatever that specific issue is, and I was getting ready the other morning, Dr. Dobson, and it hadn't entered my mind for years. And I was in a bathroom there at my house getting ready, and I had a memory of hurting one of my children in my anger. And I mean, I just felt condemnation and I spoke out loud, no one in the house and I said, "This is not truth. I have been forgiven for that. I am no longer under condemnation for that, and Christ has forgiven me." And-

Dr. James Dobson: Apparently your kids have too.

Julie Barnhill: ... they have. We talk about all this. I would not dare come on this program and speak of anything. Everything gets run by them, everything. And I think there's an element of that truth that as women, we need to start speaking truth. We need to know the Word of God because it is our weapon because the enemy will... She'll be 87 years old and writing on a piece of paper, "I feel so guilty that my son saw this pornography," or she can this day be able to lay it down and have freedom in her life from that.

Dr. James Dobson: As difficult as that exposure has been for her son, that falls in the category of what you wrote about, a false guilt from her perspective.

Julie Barnhill: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: She didn't do it on purpose, didn't know about it, couldn't have prevented it and it happened. And at that point, you have to give it to the Lord and say, "I did the best I could in my inadequacy. I did the best I could Lord, make up for my inadequacy," and somehow He does. And I would be on my knees praying for that young man. This is why I talk so much about pornography because it is so addictive. It is more addictive than cocaine. That 13 year old boy sees that, some 13 year old boy sees that for the first time and is grabbed and held by it and sometimes held for the rest of his life. And it is everywhere, and it's kind of world we live in, so that is guilt inducing too.

Julie Barnhill: Could we pray for these moms that have been brave enough to-

Dr. James Dobson: You know what, Julie? I had intended to do that at the end of this program.

Julie Barnhill: ... wonderful.

Dr. James Dobson: We're not quite there yet, but you do that. Would you pray for them? You have a great heart for moms, don't you?

Julie Barnhill: I do. I want them just to have freedom in their life. And gosh, I'm no... I struggle. And just the strength in us being real with one another and being able to make up what's lacking in one another's faith means a lot.

Dr. James Dobson: Do it right now, will you?

Julie Barnhill: "Father, I thank you so much for these women, Lord, who are brave enough to speak Lord to this vast audience that it will hear their voice. And I know that their story is probably 10,000 other women's stories. So I pray, father, I pray for the Son Lord, who has been so gripped by pornography. I pray that Lord, you would bring truth to his innermost parts and break the bondage, Lord, of that just profane sin, Lord God, that he was exposed to.

I pray for Louise God that you will free her from the guilt. Lord God, she didn't do anything wrong. She can leave that in this place today. And Lord, I pray for

this young mother with these little ones all under the age of four and help her be gracious towards herself, help her to speak truth and remind herself, "I have three kids under the age of four. Of course I'm tired and, of course, everything doesn't feel ooey gooey all the time. But the truth is I love these children and I delight in them." Just free us Lord, and let us no longer walk in condemnation but in freedom in your name I pray."

Dr. James Dobson.: "And Lord, I conclude this prayer by calling on You to touch all of those that have heard this broadcast and some have had tears in their eyes, and some have remembered events that they had repressed, and I just ask You to be with them today. I pray that You'll put your great arm around them. And those that have been terrorized by guilt, some of it of their own making, and that You will use what we've done today to eradicate that, to give them emotional wholeness and a closeness with those that they may have failed. Even if they did fail, Lord, You have forgiven us of all sin.

There is no sin that you cannot forgive. And I just pray that this program would be a blessing to you and to your people, and that some of the things that Julie has said today will be remembered and echoed back in days to come. I pray for this book that You will bless it, and I thank you for Julie Barnhill and all of the work that she's doing, it has come from Your hand. It's clear that she loves you, and we put this program and the last two that we did on this subject in Your hands today. Amen."

Julie Barnhill: Amen. Can I give the ladies some homework just real quick?

Dr. James Dobson: Yes, please do.

Julie Barnhill: Well, I encourage women to write a letter to their mother or make a phone call, send an email if you must, but maybe a little more personal. Take her out to lunch. Tell her what she did right. I'm 41 years old and my daughter came home from college one day and someone had said something at her school and she's like, "Mom, I know that's not right doctrinally, because I remember you telling me..." And I was like, "I love you. I'm giving you everything." And I did this with my mom not too long ago. I wrote to her and I said, "Thank you for driving me a half hour to Piano lessons and sitting there a half hour while took the lessons and driving a half hour back." Our mothers are never too old to hear us reaffirm to them what they've done right.

Dr. James Dobson: What a great idea.

Julie Barnhill: Yeah. A sweet place for us. And if there's a mom there that's like, "Oh, I feel so guilty," you're never too old to hear your mother say, "You know what? I was wrong about that, I'm sorry." And you may find out the thing that you've been feeling guilty for 53 years, your kid's like, "What are you talking about? I don't have any clue. I don't remember it at all."

Dr. James Dobson: Kids are resilient. They do bounce back.

Julie Barnhill: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: He never called us to do it perfectly. And so that's just great stuff. We could probably take one more question.

Della: My name is Della and I'm from Colorado Springs. And the guilt that I feel is maybe from doing too much right. And I was not raised in a Christian home, but when my husband and I first got married, I came to the Lord and was adamant that my children were going to grow up in God's Word, and they did. We homeschooled a few years. They went to Christian school, we raised them in God's Word. They memorized the Scripture, we read the Bible, we prayed with them, we prayed for them. And all three of them made choices that took them away from the Lord, that the church didn't love them when they were teenagers and had made these choices, and they were wound wounded. We supported them no matter what. We loved them unconditionally. We did everything we could and they have all three chosen to step away from the Lord. What more could I have done?

Dr. James Dobson: Well, God gives us a free choice and He does allow individuals to walk away from Him. If that were not true, the Lord would not have seen both His first two creations, Adam and Eve fall into grievous sin. He was a perfect father. And it happened right there in the Garden of Eden. So I'm not sure, I haven't been there and I don't know the circumstances. I'm not sure that you can take all the blame any more than if they turned out to be Billy Graham's or something, that you would take all the credit-

Della: Well, I do.

Dr. James Dobson: ... because it is an individual thing.

Julie Barnhill: Sure.

Della: And I do real well until I meet other Christians.

Julie Barnhill: Exactly.

Della: And they say, "Oh, you have three children. What are they doing?" And I'm thinking, "I don't even want to tell you," because they say, "Oh, this one's a minister and this one's a missionary here and this one is..." And I'm thinking, man...

Julie Barnhill: Oh, Della. Let me ask you, and this goes back to what we were talking about. Did you violate a law?

Della: No.

Julie Barnhill: No. And then let's go to the, are these feelings of inadequacy, feelings of culpability that somehow you must have done something that contributed this? I overemphasize the Scripture. I use the word as a hammer. Is that what you feel?

Della: Sure. And to some extent I think I feel I have to stand before the Lord. These were treasures that He gave me. And I'm going to have to stand before the Lord and say-

Julie Barnhill: But truth, did you train up your child-

Della: ... I did.

Julie Barnhill: ... in the way of the Lord?

Della: All three of them.

Julie Barnhill: Did they hear, I'm sorry? Did they see grace?

Della: Mm-hmm. And I love you and the laughter.

Julie Barnhill: Absolutely.

Della: I mean, it's like we did everything right. What happened?

Julie Barnhill: But see, there's no guarantee.

Della: Yeah, there isn't.

Julie Barnhill: And Dr. Dobson, that's what I talked about how we do have that element in our Christian subculture at times, that there really is a checklist for perfect Christian kids. And when it doesn't happen, we don't want to talk about it.

Dr. James Dobson: And that may be the greatest guilt at all because-

Julie Barnhill: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: ... if they don't come to know Christ, you'll never see them again in the afterlife, and that is a thought so awesome and so depressing that it could destroy you. But let me just ask you, how old are your kids?

Della: My son will be 27 soon, my daughter 25 and the youngest is 23.

Dr. James Dobson: You know what, it's not over.

Julie Barnhill: No.



Della: No, it's not.

Audience: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: It's not over. You just keep praying. Rather than trying to chide them or try to force them to do something now, you just go out there in your closet and get on your knees and you pray for them, and you might try fasting. I know that's a very difficult thing to do, but for some reason God honors it. It's all through Scripture, and you just hold them before the Lord every day. And you might live to see something very exciting, and I'd rather think you will.

Julie Barnhill: When the enemy would come to you with those accusations, that's what they are. What does he do? He lies. He steals. He kills and he destroys. So instead of living present and enjoying them here, you're still back here. I would speak truth. I would speak truth. I would say, "I am not guilty of that. I trained them in the Word of God. I imparted wisdom and understanding and knowledge." On that day when they stand before God, you won't be called in with them. I mean, there's some liberty in that. I mean, they will have to give an account for their own life just like we will, and it'll be your stuff. And again, kind of like Louise, I pray that you can walk away leaving right here in this chair that it's false guilt.

Della: And I have, and like I say, I do real well and then all of a sudden, here it is again. And you're thinking, God has given me, my middle daughter, she lives with us and I have three grandchildren that live with us. So you know that all the stuff that I think, "Well, maybe I didn't do that quite right. I'm trying to do right again with it." So it's a vicious cycle. It's what you said, a vicious cycle.

Dr. James Dobson: And it's related to comparison.

Della: It is.

Dr. James Dobson: It hurts the worst when you look at somebody else and say, "Look how well they did. Why did I fail? Why did I fall short-

Julie Barnhill: Why didn't it work out for me?

Dr. James Dobson: ... in the most important thing I was trying to do? But the game isn't over. I think it's the 20th chapter of Ezekiel that says, "The father is not responsible for the sins of the son, and the son is not responsible for the sins of the father. Each must be accountable to God." Now, this is a paraphrase, but it's a scripture that puts the responsibility where it belongs when you're talking about adults. Each makes his or her own relationship with Christ, and it's not appropriate for there to be intergenerational guilt.

Julie Barnhill: Absolutely. Good stuff.

Dr. James Dobson: All right.

Julie Barnhill: One of my things I'm talking about in the book is what's wrong with ordinary? You go to Google and Amazon and put in children and it's like, "How to raise extraordinary kids and exceptionally fantastic kids." And I'm just like, "What's wrong with ordinary? What's wrong with just having a kid that's just a good kid?" Because they're exceptional to you.

Dr. James Dobson: Yes.

Julie Barnhill: They're extraordinary to you and your family, and I think that would relieve a little bit of this pressure.

Dr. James Dobson: I wrote about that in *Hide or Seek* a long time ago, many years ago, and I said, "At the moment of birth, you are very anxious that that child coming into the world is average. You want him to have four fingers and a thumb on each hand. You want him to have the nose and ears. Average is what you want from that point on average will not be good enough."

Julie Barnhill: That is so true.

Dr. James Dobson: You want him to be exceptional.

Julie Barnhill: That's so true.

Dr. James Dobson: And kids usually aren't.

Julie Barnhill: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: Most of them are just ordinary kids.

Julie Barnhill: Exactly. I'm ordinary. I've got my stuff.

Dr. James Dobson: Julie, I've loved having you here-

Julie Barnhill: Thank you so much.

Dr. James Dobson: ... three days.

Julie Barnhill: It's just a delight.

Dr. James Dobson: And God's blessings to you, Julie. Bring your husband next time.

Julie Barnhill: You know what? I am. He was disappointed he couldn't make it this trip, so I'll definitely bring him along.

Dr. James Dobson: We'll welcome him.

Roger Marsh: Well, that was truly encouraging advice from our guest panel of bombs, along with our special broadcast guest, Julie Barnhill, and the discussion she had with our own Dr. James Dobson here on Family Talk. It's been a refreshing reminder for each of us that our job is to be faithful to God and to lean into his wisdom and love with regards to our children. Now, if you missed any part of this three-day series, just visit our website at [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk) and you'll find the entire series there. Again, that's [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). I'm Roger Marsh. Have a blessed weekend, and be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

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

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