



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Marriage with Grace and Honor

**Guest(s):** Gary Smalley

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- Dr. 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.
- Dr. Tim Clinton: I am Dr. Tim Clinton with Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I want to pass along some encouragement before our radio program today. In Isaiah 41:10, the Lord says to the prophet, "Do not fear for I am with you. Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Surely I will help you. Surely I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."
- Dr. Tim Clinton: There's obviously a great deal of assurance and comfort in that verse, especially in these difficult times, but I want to highlight one phrase in particular, "God's righteous right hand." God's right hand stands for his power and divine control. It's also the evidence of his fulfilled promises. So when he tells us that he will be there to help us in times of trouble, we can count on it. Place your hope in the presence, authority, and strength of our God, because He set His only son just for you.
- Dr. Tim Clinton: With that, let's begin.
- Dr. Tim Clinton: Welcome to Family Talk, a division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton wishing you a happy new year as we continue this first week of 2021. Sounds great, doesn't it? On behalf of Dr. Dobson, who is with his lovely wife, Shirley, out in California enjoying some time together while he continues writing, we want to thank you for listening and making us a part of your day. We pray that your Christmas season was one of peace and hope and filled with joy with the promise of a new year.
- Dr. Tim Clinton: Today on the program, we present an issue that has always been critical for this ministry, God's gift of Holy matrimony, marriage. It's no surprise that last year with the ongoing pandemic, many relationships have been pushed to the brink. Financial hardships and long periods of isolation in close quarters have created new tension between husbands and wives. Are you struggling in this area or maybe you know a couple of dealing with this as well, then I hope you'll listen as

now we present a fascinating conversation from the archive that Dr. Dobson had with the late Dr. Gary Smalley.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Gary was an incredible man of God with a heart for strengthening marriages. During his 40 years of ministry, he wrote over 60 books selling some 12 million copies. Gary lived out the principles he taught through his 50 plus years of marriage to his wife, Norma. Gary passed away in 2016, but his legacy continues today through the Smalley Institute.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Today's conversation focuses on how spouses can show one another grace and honor, especially when conflict arises. This lesson bears repeating. As we begin, Dr. Smalley and Dr. Dobson talk about that pesky little thing that can infect and destroy a relationship. This is a highly insightful discussion. With that, let's begin on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Gary Smalley: Let's imagine that we have a unity candle here that you would see at a typical wedding. You have the two smaller candles on the outside that are lit already, and then you have the one center candle that's not lit. So after the couple does their vows and prays, they usually get off their knees and the minister sets aside and they go up and they take each one of them, the man and the woman, takes a candle and they light the center one, and then they blow their candles out. And I've done a number of weddings, so I'm always nervous it's going to catch her veil on fire or something. And then when they're blown out, they only have one candle now.

Gary Smalley: Here's what I've been realizing this last year. The one candle that's lit is the unity candle, because now the man has left his father and his mother and he's cleaving with his wife, which means he's gluing with her, and the two of them are becoming one. Now here's what we've realized with the marriage research in the last year, the problem with couples and the average divorce is between five and seven years after marriage, but the average couple gets married and they still remain singles. They forget that they're married.

Gary Smalley: So what they do is they include the I and the me in their conversations a lot instead of the we. We're a team now, we're not singles anymore, but if they remain singles, they get infected with these four germs. That's how this happens and they remain singles by having ordinary arguments about ordinary things, money, sex, kids, in-laws, job, cars, whatever it is, okay? Just ordinary stuff. But what they do is they approach every argument as a single and they try to win their position, which is remaining a single and that infects them with these germs.

Dr. Dobson: And it interferes with intimacy.

Gary Smalley: And it interferes with intimacy.

Dr. Dobson: Intimacy is the most satisfying aspect of a good marriage.

Gary Smalley: Absolutely.

Dr. Dobson: And it is eluding many people.

Gary Smalley: Just think of this comment that Oliver taught me five years ago. All arguments are doorways to intimacy, to oneness, but if a couple doesn't see it as a doorway, they tend to avoid the argument or they use an argument in a destructive way.

Gary Smalley: So the four germs are all destructive ways of arguing, communicating in a marriage, which infect the marriage and the disease is anger, but the infections are these. Withdrawing during argument, it's almost always the male because we get easily flooded with too many words and we don't like to argue or fight without rules, and so women can fight without rules. And so, but we don't like that so we withdraw. That's a germ and it causes the disease of anger for both people, and that's what kills love. That's why the divorce rate between five and seven years is so significant.

Gary Smalley: Second one is escalation. Start yelling at each other, saying things you don't really mean, shouldn't say, it causes anger. In fact, a man's heart rate goes up almost twice as fast as a woman's. When a man hits a hundred beats a minute, he loses his ability to continue the argument rationally, so he either withdraws or becomes sometimes verbally or even physically abusive. So that's a dangerous thing.

Gary Smalley: Third one is the number one killer of marriages in America today. Any time you belittle your mate or you come across as superior, you say and do things that imply that your mate is inferior to you. Little cut downs. This is usually during an argument. Listen how fascinating, and you may have heard this before, but Dr. John Gottman, as steady couples over a weekend where they videotape everything that goes on over the weekend, there's a muscle on a man's face right here, it's right here on the edge of his mouth, and when it goes up with his eyes, rolling a little bit ...

Dr. Dobson: Sort of an Elvis Presley muscle.

Gary Smalley: Yeah, right. Exactly. It goes up. During a conversation with his wife during the day, they have actually recorded how many times that happens during the day. They have a scientific name for that muscle and I can never remember it, but anyway, they can tell a woman what kind of diseases she will have three years later, depending on the number of times that muscle goes up during the day. And it's not just men, I mean, women are great at this. I mean, they could put us down so fast, and that is the most destructive disease, which is the exact opposite of the major commandment in scripture of considering others to be more valuable than you consider yourself.

Dr. Dobson: You know, it never ceases to amaze me the power of words.

Gary Smalley: Yeah.

Dr. Dobson: They're so easy to say. You don't even have to think much to say these terribly powerful words.

Gary Smalley: Right.

Dr. Dobson: And in fact, God himself identified himself with the word.

Gary Smalley: Exactly.

Dr. Dobson: And the things that you say in one of those moments, when your heart rate is over 100 can be just thrown out there so quickly.

Gary Smalley: Sure.

Dr. Dobson: And not even really meant, but they're remembered for a lifetime.

Gary Smalley: Sure. Sure, they are. Right, and that's major, major damage to that relationship. And if it's over and over and over, it's like a lot of women don't realize every time they say, "Would you put your seatbelt on?" Those little kind of demeaning statements, parenting that husband, oftentimes the average woman has no idea that that means I'm infecting our relationship with the worst germ that you can infect it with, which is the germ of belittling.

Dr. Dobson: It diminishes the personhood of the individual.

Gary Smalley: Exactly. And the hurt that it causes, and oftentimes not discussed because it's hard to discuss that. If you do, you'll escalate or withdraw. And then there's the germ, which is really powerful. My son, Greg is a psychologist also. He believes this is the biggest germ from his counseling experience, and he says, it's when a couple starts seeing more negative in their mate than is actually there.

Gary Smalley: So in other words, human nature, anyway, you know how we like bad news and stuff all the time? Well, when you see too much negative in your mate, the more negative you see, the more you will see, which it's a downward cycle because it's called confirmation bias. Whatever you believe about your mate, you both see and here even if it isn't true.

Dr. Dobson: I'm not sure if I understand. When you say he sees more negative, he sees characteristics that bother him about the other person.

Gary Smalley: Exactly. And then they exaggerate them and then the more they exaggerate these negative things, they actually believe ... For example, if we're going to buy one of those new Volkswagen Bugs, we see them everywhere because it's got selected perception. Well, when a woman thinks her husband is overly negative than actually what it really is, she'll see it bigger and bigger continually.

Dr. Dobson: Okay. Those are the four.

Gary Smalley: Those are the four.

Dr. Dobson: Viruses or bugs, if you will.

Gary Smalley: Right, exactly. Right.

Dr. Dobson: Let's talk about the three antibiotics.

Gary Smalley: Right, so what it is, here are the three antibiotics. The skill of honor. In fact, there's three things you do with the skill of honor. My mate is very valuable, just like autographed by God. Okay? So they're very valuable. And the second thing you do is you make a list of all the things that are very valuable about your mate. In other words, this has been proven scientifically that if you start a written list of the positive things about your mate and you keep that list going for years, that alone is enough to sustain you during any crisis in marriage. Dr. John Gottman found that.

Gary Smalley: Well, what we found also is one researcher in one of the universities in the east found that when he took conflicted couples and gave them various assignments, he found that if he got couples just to make a list and to remind each other of this list on a regular basis of how positive you are as my mate, to share the list with each other, he found that 70% of the time if they only made the list and reviewed it and kept it going, those couples improved significantly and stayed in love readily.

Dr. Dobson: Okay, that's the second point under the first antibiotic.

Gary Smalley: Yeah, that's true. That's true. Okay.

Dr. Dobson: The third point under the first antibiotic.

Gary Smalley: Is you tell your mate verbally. You express it either in writing or you say it on a regular basis of how valuable that person is. And that concept of honor is what the scripture says is considering others is really more valuable than we consider ourselves. It's really Romans 12:10, "Be devoted to one another in brotherly love, preferring one another in honor."

Dr. Dobson: See that's the other end of the continuum between what you talked about a minute ago of diminishing the personhood ...

Gary Smalley: Exactly.

Dr. Dobson: Of the other individual.

Gary Smalley: And so that one, that one skill eliminates the worst germ in relationships, okay?

Dr. Dobson: Okay.

Gary Smalley: The second skill is we call LUV talk, L-U-V, and that's Listen, Understand, and Validate. I got this from Dr. Stanley, and then I realized one day when I was going through a drive-through restaurant, McDonald's, Wendy's, one of those, okay? That's exactly what they do. Now they have spent millions of dollars researching how to have good relationships with their customers and not having customers divorcing them. What do they do? They do exactly what Scott Stanley found is the best communication in the world to eliminate these four germs in marriage. They do the exact same thing at McDonald's.

Gary Smalley: In other words, you drive up there, somebody always says, "Welcome to McDonald's. Can I take your order?" That's very honoring. And then you say, "I want a hamburger, fries, and a diet Coke." Okay? And then they always say, "Let me see if I'm hearing you right." They don't say those words, but they say, "You want a hamburger, a fries, and a diet Coke." And then you say, "Yes." And then you go forward.

Gary Smalley: Now if they would have said, "You want a child's meal and a diet Coke," you say, "No, no, no, no, no, no, I didn't say that." And then if they say ... You never hear them say, "Excuse me, sir, I'm looking in that round mirror over there, see, and I see you're a pretty good sized person. Are you sure you want a double cheeseburger, sir?" They don't say that because that would be invalidating. That would be belittling.

Dr. Dobson: I hate to mess up your illustration, but I can't understand those little speakers that they talk on anyway.

Gary Smalley: That's right. But the point is they don't lose their customers by giving their opinion. They listen, they validate ...

Dr. Dobson: And give you what you want.

Gary Smalley: And they give you what you want. And if you don't get what you want, what do they always do? "I'm sorry. Let me redo that order." They're very careful. Guess what we do in marriage though? And all it said is around mainly opinions, but let's say when we do it in marriage, what happens is that your mate gives you an opinion about something you're arguing about, what's the typical couple do? They belittle one another's opinion. They express by either facial or verbal ways of saying, "Don't you realize how smart I am, and how right I am?"

Dr. Dobson: And how dumb you are.

Gary Smalley: Yes. How inferior you are. Can't you get it? When we operate that way we get infected, but if you use the method that Scott Stanley taught me, which my wife and I have been using for five years, and it's literally revolutionized our own discussions on arguments. And you can stop a teenager dead in their tracks in

an argument by using the method, and they don't even need to know what you're doing.

Dr. Dobson: Which is to affirm them, to listen.

Gary Smalley: To listen, to repeat back what they're saying. You don't have to like what they're saying, you don't have to agree with what they're saying, all you do is use the method and you know what I did? I guess I can tell this. About a month ago with Norma, she and I were having an argument about how we're going to reorganize our business. It's been a little touchy. Do you ever have any kind of touchy discussions with Shirley?

Dr. Dobson: No, we never have any touchy discussions.

Gary Smalley: So we were having this, okay? We were driving from Keystone down to Denver to get on the airports, so we had a couple of hours drive. I decided to use this method without her knowing what I was doing, and without me doing my part. In other words, when you really use this right, you exchange with each other. We started in Keystone. I did nothing but listen to her for two hours and repeat back what she was saying, clarify what she was saying, and Jim, I was totally amazed that she answered her own argument with some of the best solutions I've ever heard in my life.

Dr. Dobson: She didn't need you to give an answer.

Gary Smalley: She didn't need me. And I affirmed her solutions because I liked them, and it taught me again that oftentimes if you just listen and understand a person, it's amazing.

Dr. Dobson: The only thing Shirley and I fight over is the thermostat. And I don't know how we're going to get around that one. She says, "I'm cold. I'm turning it up."

Gary Smalley: That's right.

Dr. Dobson: Now also I say, "I see, you're cold." But I'm not sure we can solve that one quite as easily.

Gary Smalley: Yeah, but you know what's fun is when you both hear each other and you both understand each other and you both validate each other because the unity candle is really an expression of that. What happens is our mind comes up with some of the greatest solutions to include both of us. That's really the intimacy in a marriage is when you come up with a solution that you both like, so use your brain to do that. I love it. It's been amazing.

Dr. Dobson: Okay. We have one more antibiotic coming.

Gary Smalley: Yes. Yes, one more antibiotic. According to the research experts, almost all arguments are caused because people perceive their needs is not going to be met. It's either there it's not being met or it's perceived not to be met, so what we have discovered is that people have these relational needs deep in their heart. If they don't think they're going to be met, they even get into arguments. It's like the surface thing we're arguing about has really nothing to do with my deeper need.

Gary Smalley: For example, my wife has a tremendous need to be organized and for our home to be in order and for us to abide by all the rules in life. She doesn't like to park in a place that says, even hints, that we shouldn't be parking there. Where my personality can basically park anywhere, and so you know Silver Dollar City in Branson, Missouri has an employee parking lot. Well, I know the owners real well, so they've told me to park there. Well, Norma can't do that because it says, "Sticker parking only." So I had to go to the owners eventually and get a sticker and stick it rear view mirror kind of thing to be able to do that.

Gary Smalley: Well, Norma's need is order and regularity and precision a lot of times, it's not mine. So we'll argue about a lot of things that have nothing to do with what we're arguing about. It's all about her need to be in order. So since I know that's her biggest need, she knows my biggest need is to do fun things with other people, to talk and do fun things with people. Since she knows that's my need, she falls over herself to make sure that need is met in my life.

Dr. Dobson: When you think about that unity candle, it's really incredible that you can bring these two different, very different personalities together.

Gary Smalley: Totally. Exactly.

Dr. Dobson: And that they can mesh with one another.

Gary Smalley: And see, the fun thing is we can use our brain that God gave us to find out what her need is, she finds out what my need is, and we don't have to hassle each other over these trivial arguments that we've had for years because we really are attending ...

Gary Smalley: Oh, here's another great statistic. They found that what separates couples who are divorced and couples who are happily married is 20 minutes a day of attending to each other's needs. Just 20 minutes, everybody has 20 minutes, and if you know what that need is, and you attend to it, it's amazing.

Gary Smalley: So here again, if I know what infects my marriage, and incidentally, Norma, and I do not escalate anymore, never. When we start, which I'm the one that usually wants to start, what happens is that one of us remembers that this is a germ, so we don't do it anymore, and we never do it on vacation. In fact ...

Dr. Dobson: There are those hot buttons. Those things that really set us off.



Gary Smalley: Exactly.

Dr. Dobson: When you see those coming, what do you do?

Gary Smalley: Well, one of us says time out and we both say to each other from time to time, "That's not acceptable." And so we don't go that way. Now another thing Norma does, which has really been powerful for my life is we have three people in Branson who are like our 9-1-1 group. And when we get into a serious discussion that we can't solve on our own, she'll say, "Why don't we call our 9-1-1 group?" And we get together, use the same method, but it's people who love us and we do it in front of people. So it's like a small group, one of our small groups.

Dr. Dobson: And you have three of those.

Gary Smalley: Yeah, we have three people. I'm in three different small groups.

Dr. Dobson: You mean every week you're with three ...?

Gary Smalley: No, I'm not in every week in every group, but I have groups, I'm training leaders to have small groups, so I'm in small groups with Norma and we open our life up and tell them the struggles we're going through. We're as normal as every other couple. I mean, every couple goes through pretty similar things, and so we're able to be as transparent as we need to be because we're like everybody else.

Dr. Dobson: And you have confidence that that won't be shared with anybody and won't be abused.

Gary Smalley: They can share it with ... I make my living sharing that. That's how I make my living. I mean, all my books talk about my screw ups, so that's what I do. And you know what? You'd think I'd get this stuff down someday and I got to be reminded, and it's amazing.

Dr. Dobson: What would you say, Gary, to a young couple, they've just been married a week or two, and they haven't had all these problems yet, they're still on the honeymoon emotionally.

Gary Smalley: Right.

Dr. Dobson: And they want to live together forever.

Gary Smalley: Sure.

Dr. Dobson: They want their marriage to have intimacy. They want to do the right things. Where do they start?

Gary Smalley: I would say that they can't let another month go by without finding the great materials that are available. They've got to get training and they got to get into a mentor group, small group, and keep that training going there. They'll be amazed. Take my own son, Michael, of counseling therapists graduated from Wheaton. Eighteen hours after he got wedded, he wasn't speaking to his wife.

Dr. Dobson: Isn't that interesting?

Gary Smalley: They were so locked in an argument.

Dr. Dobson: That always amazes me that you can go through the courtship and spend 18 hours a day looking at each other's eyes.

Gary Smalley: Right.

Dr. Dobson: And you're just so in love, you can hardly bear it.

Gary Smalley: Exactly, right.

Dr. Dobson: And you get married and then you find out some things you hadn't stumbled over yet.

Gary Smalley: One year they argued like cats and dogs, but never said a thing to me. And he was embarrassed, he was grieved, he didn't know what direction it was going to go. And it was Scott Stanley's training, the prep stuff, the speaker/listener, which is really what I call the drive-through listening, the LUV talk, changed their marriage.

Dr. Dobson: You get your stuff out of the word and if it is consistent ...

Gary Smalley: Exactly.

Dr. Dobson: With what you find there.

Gary Smalley: Exactly.

Dr. Dobson: You can be pretty sure that this is going to be right.

Gary Smalley: That's 1 Timothy 6:3, "Is it consistent with what Jesus taught and will it lead to God living?" That's one of my favorite verses.

Dr. Dobson: Is it still possible to live together for a lifetime?

Gary Smalley: Absolutely. There's so much ... Any couple ... In fact, we even have our own counseling center at our center now with licensed counselors, we see some of the most impossible situations turn right around. So there's hope for I don't care what couple, whatever they're dealing with, I know there's hope today.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah, I would like to offer that hope to those who are listening to us now and whose marriages are in serious trouble. I mean, there are a lot of them out there and they've contemplated divorce, they see no way out. There is hope for those folks.

Dr. Dobson: I taught a Sunday school class back in the seventies and early eighties, I think for 12 or 14 years, it was a big class and it was made up of young married couples. There were as many as a 100 to 150 people there, and out of that class, there were about 20 people who were threatened with the most serious marital difficulties, primarily infidelity. And most of those people survived as a couple, and most of them are still married today.

Gary Smalley: Sure.

Dr. Dobson: So it is possible to face those things and to overcome them.

Gary Smalley: But when you're in the middle of them or you're easing into them, it seems so impossible.

Dr. Dobson: Gary, it's always fun to have you here.

Gary Smalley: Thank you.

Dr. Dobson: You're a good man.

Gary Smalley: I love it.

Dr. Dobson: Tell Norma I'm mad at her for not filming. We'll catch it next time.

Gary Smalley: That's right.

Dr. Dobson: We're going to have to go back to Branson. I love this place.

Gary Smalley: Yes, you're welcome any time.

Dr. Dobson: The last time I was there, you took me to the most incredible fishing hole I've ever seen in my whole life.

Gary Smalley: Yeah, Dogwood Canyon. Right.

Dr. Dobson: Is that open to the public?

Gary Smalley: Absolutely.

Dr. Dobson: Is it really?

Gary Smalley: Yep. Yep, and it's more than just fishing now. It's hiking, biking.

Dr. Dobson: Well come back and see us again, Gary.

Gary Smalley: Okay, thank you very much.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's some incredible wisdom laid out in this classic Family Talk broadcast. This is Dr. Tim Clinton. Again, I want to echo what Gary and Dr. Dobson were just saying, marriage is hard, difficulties will come, but disagreements in times of disharmony don't need to end in divorce. Fight for your relationship. It'll be worth it in the end.

Dr. Tim Clinton: If you'd like to learn more about the late Gary Smalley or pick up other useful resources, go to [DrJamesDobson.org](http://DrJamesDobson.org), [DrJamesDobson.org](http://DrJamesDobson.org). Once there on today's broadcast page, you'll discover more about the Smalley Institute and the work of this godly man. Go now to [DrJamesDobson.org](http://DrJamesDobson.org). That's [DrJamesDobson.org](http://DrJamesDobson.org).

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's all the time we have for today. Join us again tomorrow for more of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Have a blessed day.

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

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