



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Filling Your Love Tanks

Guest(s): Dennis Swanberg

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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: The book of Ephesians is filled with instructions for husbands to earnestly love their wives as Christ loves the church, but there's more to marital love than just romance. Men are responsible for caring for every aspect of their wives' wellbeing. And one of the problems husbands deal with is loving their wives in the way that wives personally need to be loved and appreciated.

Welcome to Family Talk with your host, psychologist, and best-selling author Dr. James Dobson. I'm Roger Marsh filling in for Dr. Dobson today. And you're about to hear from pastor and comedian Dennis Swanberg. Raised in Texas, Dennis Swanberg received his bachelor's degree from Baylor University and completed his master's of divinity and doctorate in ministry from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has spoken to countless organizations and ministries around the country and is the author of nine best-selling books. On today's broadcast, Dennis Swanberg will use the analogy of filling up a car's gas tank to illustrate how husbands are to properly satisfy their wives emotional, physical, and spiritual needs. Let's listen now to a talk that he gave at the Renewing The Heart Conference some time ago on this edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Dennis Swanberg: All right. Man, I tell you, when I'm in an arena like this and the echo effect and the everything, makes me want to just break into Billy Graham. I just feel like preaching like Billy. I want to preach and preach and preach and preach and preach forever, and ever, and ever, and ever. I love to say forever. And actually what I'm doing right now is letting these sound men get used to me moving around and then they'll get it together. God will bless them. We'll enjoy.

Now I tell you what, it's good to be back in Texas, born in Austin, Texas to Floyd Leon and Pauline Bernadine. And I don't know where my mama is, Pauline Bernadine, but wherever you are, Pauline Bernadine, you need to get an usher to bring you up right down here. I want you sitting down here. So an usher bring Pauline Bernadine down here close. Wherever she is. Now, the number one little love in my life is my honey love, my little woman, Lauree. My sugar babe,

my woman, I'm her man. I said, "Baby, do I look like a hunk?" She said, "You're more of a chunk." That'll bless you. Thank you. I love you, baby.

I love my wife. My little honey love, I do. But ladies, y'all know this. I must share this, sometime my little honey irritates me. She does. She irritates me. I mean, I love her. I give my life for her, but she irritates me. I don't know if we ever irritate y'all, but y'all irritate us. For instance, I'll come in off the road traveling here all the time and there, and I come home, I call home first from the airport, check out the temperature of the home. I'll call and she'll say, "Hello." Just perky, perky. "Hello." "Hey, baby, big swan." "Huh?" "Big swan." "Huh?" "Everything okay at home?" "Well, you might want to talk to Chad when you get home." "Is he nearby?" "Hold on, Chad, it's your father."

And you know these 16 year olds, "Hmm, hmm." "Speak clearly, son." "What? I ain't done nothing. I ain't done nothing." "Look, you've done something. Mama ain't happy. She ain't happy, nobody's happy. Son, I'll be home in 15 minutes and when I get home she's going to be happy. Do you hear me? Happy in Jesus. I don't care if you have to surrender to foreign missions, she'll be happy." Been gone for five days I want mama happy, happy, happy. Big daddy's coming home. I want a happy woman.

So, I get home and I like to go out and eat. We go out to eat. I say, "Hey, we ain't heating up this kitchen, baby love." Not that a microwave can heat that thing up. Better not go there. But we get in that Suburban. I had to get her a Suburban. What do you... You women in Texas especially, y'all go through something. You got to have a Suburban. You want a Suburban. It's the Texas Cadillac. She had to have a Suburban.

So, I get home and we get in the car. And when we get in the car to go out to eat, my daddy, Floyd Leon, 6' 2", 220, in his prime, always told me, "Check your gauges. Check your gauges every 30 seconds when you drive. Check your gauges. Check your gauges." He's in the National Guard in Austin, Texas. 21 years, 36th Infantry Division. Retired as a major. He said, "Check your gauges. Check your gauges. We always check our gauges every 30 seconds on a convoy." Well, here I am, 44 and it's bred into you now. I check my gauges about every 40 seconds. I can't help it. I'm becoming more Floyd-ish every day of my life.

We're driving along. I check the gauge. Where's the gauge? On empty. And that's what irritates me, ladies. Are you listening to me? On empty. And I've been gone five, six days. I shouldn't have done this, but I said, I just lost it, "Goodnight, honey love. Can you fill the car up with gas? Man, when you get to a half tank, fill it up. Or a quarter tank. Good night, I'm going to be on the road somewhere, speaking somewhere. You're going to be on the side of the road, run out of gas. Someone's going to attack you, kill you. Be in the newspaper, speaker, entertainer's wife dead on the side of the road. Fill it up with gas. Goodnight."

I knew I went too far when she said, "Is there anything else you want to complain about? I try. Okay, I try. And you go all across the country and you make your people laugh and have a fun day. But I'm at home and I'm trying to be..." That's when I put it in reverse and start backing off. I said, "I'm sorry, baby. Don't worry about it. I'll fill it up with gas." "Well, okay, I try, okay?" "Okay, don't worry. Don't worry about it. Don't worry about it. I'll do it."

So what I have learned is when I get home, I hug folks, and then I go get in the Suburban, I take it to the gas station and fill it up. It is a ministry. It is a ministry to fill up her gas tank. But when that gas tank is full, my little woman, I mean she can go everywhere. I mean she puts the pedal to the metal, she hooks them. She can go here, there, yonder this mall and that mall. She has a ministry to the malls. I mean, when she puts her foot on the foot feet, it's like Ross Perot saying, "That's the biggest sucking sound I have ever heard in my life. That gas is being sucked down through those jets." I mean the sheiks in Iran are going, "Yes, yes." They love it when my wife drives. I mean... I mean she puts it on there.

Likewise, she's got another tank. It's called the emotional love tank. You've heard about it. Dr. Dobson's, he's spoken about it many times. Gary Smalley. But anyhow, she operates also emotionally on a fuel tank and y'all do too. And everyone uses a different fuel. Some use diesel, some are low lead, some just have to have this additive and that. And so there's all these many different fuels. One of the fuels is humor. And I like the fuel of humor because I operate well on that. And some of y'all like to laugh. You're already in a good mood to laugh.

My mom and daddy, Pauline Bernadine and Floyd Leon found out early on that their child had a problem. But humor, that's a fuel, that's sort of like a language. Now, the Apostle Paul, he was really good about it. If you got your old Bible, 1 Corinthians 13. Now, some of y'all have it memorized. It's the love chapter. When I was a pastor for 20 something years, they'd always wanted me to read this love chapter at weddings. I'd have these mamas come out and say, "I want you to read chapter 13 and look at my son-in-law, right in the face."

But the apostle Paul, he was pretty sharp when he said, "Love is patient. Love is kind." But he doesn't stop there. Now, for some of y'all, that'd be fine. Patience. "Well, I just wish my husband would be more patient with me." Some of you like kindness. "He is rough as a cob. If he could just be sensitive to me." Well, but there's more. He said, "Love is not jealous. Love does not brag. It's not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly. It does not seek its own. Is not provoked. Does not take into account a wrong suffered. Does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth. Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."

And isn't that beautiful? The Apostle Paul, he knew what was going on. He was sharp. He knew their language, he knew their fuel tank, he knew their emotions, and one of those is humor. Dr. Dobson told me some years ago, he said, "Swan, you need to add that." He said, "Humor it's important. Some people like to

laugh. They need to laugh. Loosen up. Don't take themselves so serious." Take God serious, but don't take yourself so serious.

Now, some of you, your fuel tank, your octane may be words. I'm wordy. The gift to gab. I talk all the time. I'm in the 10% of men that talk constantly. My wife's in the 10% of women that don't talk constantly. That's why I guess God got us together. When we do marriage enrichment things, I go with the women, she goes with the men. I guess that's why I'm here today. I don't know. But I'm wordy. Now, some of your men, you wish they would be wordy and talk to you and tell you things like, "I love you."

I've pastored these old boys in Texas. They'd say, "Brother Dennis, I told her when we got married..." You know the boy. I mean, I'm talking the man with the big tummy and a short tie. You know what I'm talking about? "Brother Dennis, I told her when we got married..." And some of them, their pants even curl over. "I told her when we got married that I loved her. Told her if I ever changed my mind, I'd let her know." If someone likes words, give them words. Everybody's got a different fuel.

And I tell you what, when you love your loved one with their fuel, with their language, if you understand their love tank, I guarantee you that if you will love them in their language, their fuel, it just fills them up to overflowing, they feel good about life. They just come busting out all over. But most of the time, I love my wife and my boys with my fuel instead of theirs. And that's where I've got to change. You see, Jesus Christ is our perfect example. He threw aside his rights as God and became a man and dwelt among us. And he says to you and me, "I love you. I love you." He orchestrates things in your life to say, "I love you big time. I love you."

But when we allow him to come in and love us, then we are able to begin loving others like he loves. And I tell you the beauty about it is then people are more likely to reciprocate and love you with your fuel, with your language than ever before. Let me give you a quick illustration here. My little mama, my little mama Pauline Bernadine, I love her. And I remember when I went to Baylor University. I went to Baylor, and I remember going there to Baylor, I thought I was going... It's a church school. I wanted to go to a state school, party and party hearty, boogie and boogie-woogie, build a testimony. But anyhow.

But while I was there, I don't mind telling you I got a little homesick, but a pastor there, Marshall Edwards and his wife Doris, they had just come to Waco from Austin. I had known them in Austin. They had been chaplain of our high school football team. And so when they moved to Waco, I was so glad I knew somebody. And then that spring they invited a bunch of us Austin kids to come out and eat supper.

So we went out there to eat. Doris is a great cook. And we're on the back porch and she comes out there and she says, "Okay, dinner is about to be served." And she looked at Alan, and said, "Alan, what's your favorite meat dish?" And he

said, "Meatloaf." Meatloaf. We had so many crackers in ours growing up I just never got into meatloaf. But he loved meatloaf. She said, "I've got meatloaf." "You got meatloaf? All right." She said, "I called your mother." "You called my mama?" "Yeah, and she said, you love meatloaf, so I made you a meatloaf with her recipe." "All right. All right."

Then Doris looked at Sherry Debose and said, "Sherry, what's your favorite dessert?" She said, "Well, I like that chocolate meringue with the little sweat beads on top of it." She said, "I've got it." "You've got that?" "I called your mother." "You called my mama?" "And I got your grandma's recipe." "Oh, great. With the little wet sweat beads?" "Sweat beads are on top of it." "Great."

And she went to everybody and came to me last because I was sort of like the son in their ministry. She came to me and she said, "Dennis, what's your favorite dish of all dishes?" I knew she wouldn't get it. Of all dishes, meat dishes, dessert dishes. I'd never told my mama. Little Pauline Bernadine. I was sort of cocky. I said, "I love cream peas." "Cream peas?" "Cream peas."

I'll never forget what Doris said, "Dennis, I've got cream peas." I said, "You've got cream peas?" She said, "I called your mother." "You called my mama?" "And she said, of all the foods, you love cream peas the most." And I'll always remember that. It felt so good to be loved with my kind of fuel, cream peas. She knew me. And I hate to say it, but I have no idea what my mama's favorite food dish is. I think she likes everything. But she knows mine.

Listen to me, people. Is your love tank full or are you loving on empty? Is your love tank full or are you loving and living on empty? I know the Lord fills us, but he likes to use spiritual energized flesh to love our loved ones. Speak their language, fill them with their fuel. I know it's been a long time coming. I speak all over the country and I have my own little television show, Swan's Place. I hope you'll watch that. But you know, my mom and dad don't get to be with me too often, but I want right now to do something for my mother that I think is special. And so I want my mama to come up here on the stage with me whether you like it or not, mama.

And I want the boys to play that little thing I worked up for you because I don't think I could do this. I love my little mama, Pauline Bernadine. That's right. Pauline Bernadine. Not another one like her in the whole world. One in a million. Take it back, probably one in 10 million. No. No, I don't think there's another one like her. My little mama. Was it just yesterday that your children were out in the yard at play? You remember mom over on Hemlock Street, and you stood at the door with your apron on watching us all tumble out there on the lawn.

I want to say thanks for the years now gone by. For I'm no longer a little child, just knee-high, and I appreciate all that you have gone through and doing what to me seemed so easy for you. Thanks for cooking those cream peas, and cleaning, setting the tone where a boy could feel so secure in his own home.

When I was just a little thing, you used to calm all my fears, enjoyed my excitement, and yes, you even dried my tears. You were my nurse when I was sick in bed, mentholatum all over on the spread.

And you put up with me and my old buddies when I was in my teens. Watched my ball games, encouraged my dreams. Now that I'm older, I recall your sweet face across the dinner table as dad would say grace. The smile you smiled then today is just the same. Crinkling your eyes when you call my name. I know much more than I knew as a child. And thank the Lord for my little mama, Pauline Bernadine, sweet little smile, for her tender heart, for her godly walk. That's right. That's more than words have so wisely taught. My little mama, though I'm now a man grown with a wonderful wife and two boys of my own, only you Pauline Bernadine and not another can ever be to me what you are, my mother. I love you, mom. Thank you. Is your love tank full, mama?

Pauline Bernadine: Yes.

Roger Marsh: Well, what a heartwarming conclusion to today's program here on Family Talk. We hope you've enjoyed listening to Dr. Dennis Swanberg and all that he shared on this classic edition of the program. To learn more about Dennis Swanberg, simply visit our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And while you're there, be sure to explore our great collection of programs and other resource materials on topics like marriage, parenting, or biblical truth. Take advantage of Dr. Dobson's many years of experience and expertise by going online. Again, the website is drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

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If you're a parent today, you can feel the pressure, the incredible weight that you have on your shoulders of guiding your kids through a confused and turbulent culture. Seems like everywhere you turn, there's an ungodly agenda being pushed on your kids here, and another ungodly agenda being pushed on them there, every age and stage of life. Well to walk alongside you and better equip you during this parenting season with timeless biblically based advice and tools, Dr. Dobson has bundled two of his most popular books, *Bringing Up Boys* and *Bringing Up Girls* together in one bundle. Now, we would love to send you each of these books. And we'll be happy to do so as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. You

can make your request known when you click the link on the broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh praying that you have a peaceful weekend ahead. Be sure to join us again Monday right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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

Dr. James Dobson: One of the great myths about romantic love is that it's sort of a biochemical condition that inevitably lasts a lifetime. In reality, love, even when it's genuine, is a very fragile commodity. Like one popular song proclaims, love really is a lot like a rose. It must be very carefully maintained and protected if it's going to survive. When a husband or wife works seven days a week, when there's no time for romantic activity, when they forget how to talk to each other, then love can die.

During the early days of my marriage to my wife Shirley, I was working full time trying to finish a doctorate at the University of Southern California. Shirley was teaching school and trying to maintain our little home. I can still remember clearly the evening I realized what this busy lifestyle was doing to our relationship. We still loved each other, but it's just been too long since we'd felt that spirit of warmth and closeness. I pushed aside my textbooks that night and we went for a long walk. The following semester, I carried a very light load in school, and I postponed my academic goals so as to preserve my marriage. Where does your marriage rank on your hierarchy of values? Does it get choked out by the weeds and stray branches of your busy schedule? Or is it a rare rose of great worth to be preserved and gently tended? Maybe, it's time to do some marital gardening.

Announcer: Hear more at drjamesdobson.org.