



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Essentials for Healthy Living

**Guest(s):** Dr. Paul Reisser

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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: Well welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. Most people who set a New Year's resolution are setting one to either improve their fitness, lose some weight, or improve their diet, and that's millions of people who do this every year. Now, if you have a goal to improve your health here in 2024, I hope you'll be encouraged by today's program to stick with it and keep working toward a better well-being. Today's guest, Dr. Paul Reisser is here to provide some encouragement and sound wisdom. Dr. Reisser is an author and a retired family medical doctor in Southern California. He received his medical degree at the UCLA School of Medicine back in 1975. And Paul Reisser is married to his lovely wife Terry, and together they have two grown children. Let's join Dr. Paul Reisser right now with our own Dr. James Dobson on this classic edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you have been on a broadcast before and I know that it is frustrating to you personally and as a physician that a lot of the stuff that's out there in the larger bookstores is really not research based. It is really somebody's opinion and much of it is wrong.

Dr. Paul Reisser: Exactly. And I hate to say this and I don't want to make anybody mad, but a lot of what people hear even on their Christian radio stations, especially on weekends, is bad information. And we've talked about that before and I don't want to make any enemies here, but we really-

Dr. James Dobson: And you already did.

Dr. Paul Reisser: Oh, okay. Nobody likes us.

Dr. James Dobson: I've never been so beat up, but I agreed with you.

Dr. Paul Reisser: I'm so sorry. I want everybody to love me. Nobody listen to those things and there are statements that are made and everybody wants that quick answer. They want a pill for this, whether it's from their doctor or from the health food

store or from the infomercial, \$29.95 a month and it'll zing up your energy and it'll take care of your arthritis. I hear these ads all the time. And this is a one day at a time process and that was a lot of what we were getting at.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's start by looking at the top killers in the western world and probably around the world for the most part and let's consider them one at a time. Number one's going to be heart disease.

Dr. Paul Reisser: Coronary artery disease and what's called vascular disease. Cardiovascular disease where arteries become plugged up and fail to function and as the Scriptures say, the life is in the blood. If the blood doesn't get to your heart or to your brain, it's not going to work. And the whole realm of coronary disease has been the number one cause of mortality in western countries, United States, of course, especially for the last several decades. Once we got past the infectious disease plagues that were the causes of death 100 years ago, this became the issue. And of course it ties in a lot to lifestyle, what people eat, how much they weigh, whether they exercise or not. Heredity too though, plays a big role. But our culture doesn't help.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I've been there. I had a heart attack in 1990 and a stroke in 1998 and I found out how to do things better. So it is possible to make a difference even though I've got genetics against me, because nearly every male member of my family has had this problem. But it's amazing what some very good medical care and some of the newer medicines and lifestyle changes can accomplish.

Dr. Paul Reisser: If everybody who walked through my door weighed what was considered a healthy amount for their height, didn't use tobacco, didn't use alcohol, or did it in a very modest amount, in moderation as we say, had one marital sex-partner for life, exercised a half an hour a day, got eight hours of sleep every day, had a half hour of quiet time every day, I'd be out of business. Or I'd have a very different business. I would be dealing with acute things or acute illnesses that cannot be avoided.

Dr. James Dobson: I have a feeling you'd love it.

Dr. Paul Reisser: It would actually be enjoyable, but at the same time, these types of problems are an opportunity to talk about what people need to do. You know what though is the biggest thing that comes up time and time again as we have these conversations, and it's a theme that I heard the very first time I heard you speak, is the thing that keeps people from doing these things is they're out of time. They look at their calendar and they say, I don't have time to do that stuff. I can't sleep eight hours. I don't have a half hour to exercise every day. When am I going to do that? They're going 100 an hour and it's the same thing. The things that fall by the wayside with the crazy lifestyle, the conversations with the family and with the spouse and with God are all expendable so are these healthy behaviors. So yeah, people end up at the fast food place and the microwave and here we are.

Dr. James Dobson: And it really interferes with child-rearing too. We're crazy in the western world. I'm not sure how other western countries function, but I can tell you here, I don't even know anybody who isn't working too hard. And it affects health. It affects your parenting style. It affects absolutely everything.

Dr. Paul Reisser: It totally affects health because the things that need to be done to preserve your health take the time that we don't have. How about preparing a home cooked meal of healthful materials? That takes time. Nobody wants to do that. All of the barriers to weight loss, most of them have to do with the fact that we're in a hurry.

Dr. James Dobson: So even the incidents of the biggest killer of all, cardiovascular disease could be lessened if we would follow a few simple rules. All right. What's the number two killer?

Dr. Paul Reisser: Cancer is always number two and vies with heart disease for the number one spot. People may hear it overtaking it at some point in the future because we've actually gotten better at controlling some of those risk factors for coronary disease. So now cancer continues to be the problem. And of course we have the major ones, the lung and the breast and colon and prostate always occupy the first four spots. Always a great concern because of the tendency for cancer to sneak up on us. People are always wondering how in the world can I guard against this? And a lot of debate about what are the best tests even to screen for cancer. This is not a cut and dry a topic. It's a very complicated subject. In the book, we tried to summarize the best current guidelines although they do constantly change.

For breast, for example now the recommendation is that a woman 40 and beyond get a mammogram every year. If she has a high risk because of a family history of her mother or sister having breast cancer, she'll need to go earlier. Or if she finds something that is unusual, she finds a lump on her own, that should be checked out. There are some colon screening guidelines that are reasonable and simple. Having your doctor give you the dreaded card to take home to check your bowel movements for occult blood once you turn 35 or 40 is a very wise idea. Getting a colonoscopy if you can get one starting at age 50.

Prostate screening, how about that PSA blood test? That's a test that many of us recommend, and yet if you look at the data, it's really hard to prove that that has actually saved lives. It's diagnosed a lot of cancer early, but then the question is, well, is that really cancer that's going to kill someone or not? We have a lot of complicated issues with that. And for the subject of cancer screening, it's very important to have a good solid, long-term relationship with a primary care doctor who can walk you through some of these things.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. Let's talk about one example. We'll say colon cancer. It can be devastating and horrible and frequently in the beginning does not have symptoms that send you to the doctor.

- Dr. Paul Reisser: That's right.
- Dr. James Dobson: All right. Let's suppose the man that you're talking to is 40. How often do you think he ought to have a PSA? How often do you recommend that he have a colonoscopy or a sigmoidoscopy, which is a little less complete? What do you tell him?
- Dr. Paul Reisser: At 40, there is no recommendation from anyone to get a PSA, believe it or not, unless you have a family history. Now in reality, most of the guys I see who are 40 and over want to know what that number is. And we'll often get it because I find it's helpful to track it and to trend it. So I do it even though-
- Dr. James Dobson: So you get a baseline on it.
- Dr. Paul Reisser: I get a baseline and we'll follow it and that can be very helpful in the future. For colon, I am very generous with the old stool card. I will give almost everybody who comes in for a regular visit at 40 or beyond one of those cards to take home. It's low tech, it's inexpensive. They can collect little wads of stool on three different days. If there's blood in there, they need to be screened further. I will usually recommend colonoscopy at that point. If they're 50 or more, I love to get them a colonoscopy, but most insurance won't pay for it.
- So they'll need to have a reason to go. And I'm always looking for the reason. Do they have anemia? Is their blood count low? That's always a reason to look. Do they have a parent or sibling with colon cancer? Do they have any abdominal complaint? Have they seen any blood in their stool? Some people will see a little blood when they wipe. I want to get to graphic here, and that's the only clue they'll ever get. And even though they think it's something else, it's a hemorrhoid or whatever, I tell them, "Go get a scope."
- Dr. James Dobson: Don't take a chance.
- Dr. Paul Reisser: Don't take a chance on that. And I've had too many people in my practice and in my circle of friends and in my own family with colon cancer to pass that up. I'm a big fan of scoping.
- Dr. James Dobson: Let's talk about the relationship between spiritual health and physical health. Are those really linked? I mean, we all know that Christians die too. They have cancer too. They have heart disease too. I found that out. What is the linkage between having your relationship with God deeply rooted in faith and commitment and health?
- Dr. Paul Reisser: It's a very important question. It's one that a lot of the medical organizations and journals are addressing. But in all kinds of ways, some that I think are more fruitful than others. There's quite a body of literature that our good friend, the late David Larson and his colleagues put together in a tremendous volume, a handbook containing hundreds of studies showing the linkage between a

robust, meaningful faith and various health outcomes. The caution you always have to put on that is that you can get into a expectation level that, well, if I do this, then God will do that. Or if I just live a good life, I'll never get sick, which is simply not the case. And yet if you think about it, when somebody has a commitment to God and is living in a certain way and behaving in a certain way, there are a number of things that are likely to come together.

They're probably not going to be involved in riotous living, we would hope. They're hopefully going to curtail certain habits of use of drugs or alcohol or tobacco that are harmful to health. Hopefully they'll rein in some of their sexual activities that are harmful to health. Hopefully they will begin to internalize what God has to say about them in a way that affects their emotional life. But one of the things that struck me as we were writing this was the realization that ultimately you can have the healthiest body and the best relationships and to quote Jesus, "What does it profit a person to have all those things and lose their soul?" And ultimately, what is health if not a vibrant relationship with God? We spell that out. How do you do that? There are people who I hope will read this book who don't understand that yet and who will by the time they're done.

Dr. James Dobson: As a physician in family practice, how often do you see clinical depression? You see people who come in who are just really debilitated by anxiety and by their negative outlook on life.

Dr. Paul Reisser: I see it every day. It is pervasive and it comes to us in primary care because it presents with symptoms. One of the most common events in any primary care doctor's day is a fateful three word sentence by the way that comes in as you're about to walk out the door. Isn't what they came for.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. They didn't want they initially said they wanted to talk to you.

Dr. Paul Reisser: Right. And what you'll get is something like, "Doctor by the way, why am I so tired all the time?" Classic question. There are so many things that enter that symptom of chronic fatigue that it takes a good amount of time to go through them and sort through the medical and the various issues. But the most common single reason I see for that is an undiagnosed depression. And I'll start to ask those questions. "Do you notice that you're having trouble sleeping?" "Oh yeah, I have trouble falling asleep and staying asleep." "Do you notice you're having trouble concentrating?" "Yes. I'm having trouble making up my mind what to do." "Are you crying more easily, at which point the tears start to flow." And I will see this as manifesting in a variety of physical complaints. And it's so important to get after that from all of the perspectives, the medical, the cognitive, the counseling and the spiritual. We spend a lot of time in my office talking about that issue.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you see clinical depression in the teenagers that come in?

Dr. Paul Reisser: Absolutely. And it's the hardest age group to work with for that problem because so many other things are going on. They're working through these other issues of adolescence and their hormonal changes and all the social stuff going on in school and they're having conflicts with their parents and their depression may look like acting out or drama or some other issue or not doing well at school and they're getting the ADD work up and they're getting this and they're in the counseling office. And treating an adolescent for depression is a very tricky business, because if you miss it and you don't treat it, an adolescent is at risk for doing something drastic-

Dr. James Dobson: Suicide.

Dr. Paul Reisser: And hurting themselves or suicide. At the same time many times medical treatment for adolescent with depression can be extremely successful, but sometimes they don't react very well to the medications and they'll feel worse. But a tough area, one that needs a lot of work counsel and prayer.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's move on to some of the other subjects that are there. We talked about the importance of maintaining a healthy weight. But we did not talk about diets. You have quite a bit to say in this book about the various diets. Tick them off. Everybody's talking about them today. Everybody wants to lose weight. And how do we get a handle on that?

Dr. Paul Reisser: If you go to your friendly bookstore and go to the diet, there's always a shelf full of these books. There is this diet and that diet and they break down into various categories. And then you have the boring stuff, the more straightforward issues of what is causing me to eat more than I really need and getting at that, which is what nobody wants to hear about. What I think is the biggest single impediment to weight loss is looking for that quick fix. Looking for the simple solution either, whether it's a supplement or something you're supposed to take that takes the weight off at night, which never works, or eliminating an entire food group from your diet and saying, "That'll take care of me." The more extreme the diet plan is, the less likely it is to work.

In fact, there was an interesting study where a number of patients were divided into four categories. One was put on a zone type of diet. A second was put on a very low-fat type of diet. One was put on Weight Watchers and one was I believe an Atkins type. Maybe not correct on that, but they were representative of the current types of programs that are out there. Watch them carefully for a year. It turned out at the end of the year, the single most important factor in who lost the most weight was how long they stayed with whatever they were doing. They all lost about the same amount of weight.

But the ones that quit at six months lost a lot less than the ones that stayed with it for a year, whatever it was. So I tell people, if you're going to go to some extreme, can you live with that? Can you eat no carbohydrates for the rest of your life? I don't think so. That's why these things fail. Can you eat no fat for the

rest of your life? I don't think so. They're broader themes that are simpler. We make it too hard and we make it too simple.

Dr. James Dobson: And when you come off those diets, what happens?

Dr. Paul Reisser: No way it goes right back. So all of the most successful long-term plans... I'm a big fan of Weight Watchers. They've been around for a long time. They emphasize straightforward kinds of dietary approaches. They're in it for the long haul. I tell people, treat that like it's a class at a local college. Go down there, pay your money, do your homework, show up at the class. I call it wait church. You're going to learn things you've probably heard before, but you're going to remind yourself why you need to do it. You're going to be accountable to somebody. We need those types of elements for chronic things. Nobody goes to church one time and then says, that's all I need for the next year.

We have to go to church every day because we need to hear over and over again the same things that we know and be inspired to do them and hear stories about people and how they overcame certain things. And often we need a structured environment like a Weight Watchers or something like that. A lot of churches are doing things like this now, which is fine and church ought to be a good place to do this.

Dr. James Dobson: It has the social reinforcement too, doesn't it?

Dr. Paul Reisser: Exactly. Yeah. This is hard to do by yourself. Or if you're trying to lose weight and everybody else at home has eaten all the junk food, well, that's impossible. You can't do that. Everybody's got to be on the same program. The fact is that the solutions that we want are quick and easy, just like we want instant spirituality. We want to just suddenly be made over and we don't want to do spiritual disciplines that God will use to build us. There are very basic simple things that people can do to lose weight that don't require any supplements, such as eating less food. Say now look, think about this. You never have to be hungry to lose weight. You eat when you're hungry.

But here's the trick. When you're not hungry, can you stop? Ask yourself before each bite, am I still hungry? The other thing that I see very simple, it's so simple it's almost silly that we don't think about it, is the speed of eating. Most very heavy people, when you ask them, are you a speed eater, will say yes. They eat as fast as they can. Something got them started doing that years and years ago. And I've watched them do it. And I'll say, "How about what would happen if you ate at the rate of the slowest eater at your table?" "Does your wife eat as fast as you?" "No." Okay. "Well, you can only take a bite when she does, see what happens." Because the message that you're not hungry anymore arrives at the same time whether you're eating fast or slow. And what I've learned also from watching people who've had gastric bypass surgery, which does work, is that they eat slow and they don't eat very much and they lose weight and they eat all the food groups. They don't eat just some.

We need to make smart choices in the kinds of food we eat. We need to eat lots of fruits and vegetables from all colors of the rainbow. We don't eat enough of those. The cuts of meat we eat are all too big. They shouldn't be any bigger than the palm of our hand. When we have grains, they should be whole grains. The whole grains are better for us than the refined grains. We don't really need the super sweet, sugary soft drink foods. They're a waste of calories. Those are very simple things though.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, but you're taking the fun out of life.

Dr. Paul Reisser: I know, it's the fun regulators. But not really, there's a lot of great stuff. I think the fun regulating happens when somebody says to you, you can never eat any bread again in your life. Okay. No carbs for you. And that's the answer.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, that's claustrophobic.

Dr. Paul Reisser: It really is. And most people will not stay with that type of thing for very long. Why not eat better quality, eat less, eat slow, enjoy the ride.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. We're almost out of time, Paul. Let's come back to the spiritual issue again.

Dr. Paul Reisser: Sure.

Dr. James Dobson: I look for ways in many of our programs to just go right to the heart of it. Why are we here? What are we trying to do? And the essence of it is bringing people to Jesus Christ. We want them to live healthy lives. We want them to have good marriages. We want them to be good parents. But all of that comes down to one basic thing, which is we're here to please God, to serve Him, to worship Him, and to tell as many people about Him as we can. So in a discussion of this nature, I'm keenly aware that there are people listening to us who don't know Him. There are people out there that do not know Jesus Christ. He has never made sense to them. Where do they go from here? How do they find this Lord?

Dr. Paul Reisser: We have the privilege of having good, intelligent, modern, accurate translations of the Scriptures available that allow Him to tell His story. You go into the gospels and just read what He said, and without all the baggage and understand that He knew why He was here. He came as He said, "To seek and save those that were lost."

Dr. James Dobson: The Book of John is a real good place to start.

Dr. Paul Reisser: It's a great place to start.

Dr. James Dobson: It is easily understood and we can see the whole plan of salvation there.



Dr. Paul Reisser: We can come to Him and just say, "Lord, you have died on my behalf and I thank you and I want you in charge. Take over." We talk about the meaning of the word, repent. Give up, yield. Put Him in the driver's seat. Turn around. Let Him be in charge.

Dr. James Dobson: And there are people all around you who know Him who can guide you. We're social creatures and we need one another. We really do need each other. And ask somebody that you have confidence in that seems to have the fruit of the spirit, seems to display that righteousness that comes from within. Ask them to pray for you. Ask them where they go to church. Ask them who their pastor is. You can find Him if you look for Him, because the interesting thing, the wonderful thing, the miraculous thing is He's looking for you too.

Roger Marsh: Well, what a great reminder of how important our physical health is in connection with our spiritual health. Remember, if your body is healthy, but your spirit is sick, you're still not whole. You've been listening to an insightful conversation on that topic, featuring our own Dr. James Dobson and his special guest, Dr. Paul Reisser. Now, if you'd like to share today's program with a friend or loved one, remember it's easy to do. Simply go to our website at [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). Hear these words of Jesus recorded in John 16:33. He said, "I have said these things to you that in me you may have peace, in the world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world." If you're a Christian and you're living in the world today, you can count on the fact that you will experience extremely difficult times during seasons of life, and you may never fully understand the reason why God allows these tragic circumstances to shape and mold you in the first place.

That's why if you're going through a challenging time right now and could use some encouragement, why not sign up for our free 10-day email series from the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute titled, When God Doesn't Make Sense. You'll receive messages that explore the depths of hardship and examine its purpose. And our prayer for you is that after you spend a couple of minutes every day reading the wisdom from Dr. Dobson on this topic, you'll be strengthening your faith. To sign up, just go to [drjamesdobson.org/when-god-doesnt-make-sense-series](http://drjamesdobson.org/when-god-doesnt-make-sense-series). Again, that's [drjamesdobson.org/when-god-doesnt-make-sense-series](http://drjamesdobson.org/when-god-doesnt-make-sense-series). And remember, you don't have to put an apostrophe in the word doesn't. Also keep in mind that if you would like a copy of Dr. Dobson's book by that same title, the URL is a little easier to navigate [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). Well, I'm Roger Marsh thanking you for joining us today. May God richly bless you and your family as you continue to grow deeper in your relationship with Him. And be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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