



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: God's Wisdom for Raising Children – Part 1

Guest(s): John Rosemond

Air Date: January 27, 2022

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Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello, everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, which is the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm James Dobson, coming to you through the airways, just as I've been doing for 45 years. My focus now is the same as it's always been, to strengthen families and to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ in an increasingly godless culture. Now, for today's installment of Family Talk, I'm going to share a recorded conversation that I had some years ago with my friend and colleague, John Rosemond. John and I have a passion for raising kids in healthy environments, and that's what we're going to talk about today.

John has had an impressive career working with families, children and parents since 1971. He earned his master's degree from Western Illinois University, and he has been a professional counselor ever since. He has published a column that has been syndicated in many newspapers through the years. He has written 11 bestselling parenting books, and in the last few years, John has appeared on numerous national television programs. You may have seen him there.

He's been married to Wilma for over 40 years, and they have two children and seven grandchildren. John Rosemond and I share a conviction that contrary to much popular opinion, parents are responsible for teaching kids obedience and respect for authority. Proper discipline and boundaries for children in the home are vital to raising your kids to become healthy adults, and instilling God's Word and wisdom into them is imperative. It is job one for moms and dads. So if you don't get that right, then nothing else matters. Without further ado, let's listen now to part one of my conversation with John Rosemond on the topic of God's wisdom for raising children.

We draw a lot of our information from the same source, from the Scripture, and from the Judeo-Christian system of values, and that's why we have been friends for many, many years, going back to the mid-1970s, and he's been our guest here before. I'm speaking of psychologist and author John Rosemond, and he's written a number of bestselling books on parenting, including the one that we're going to talk about today, *Parenting by the Book: Biblical Wisdom for Raising Your Child*. He's obviously a deeply committed Christian. He has his own column that is carried in, John, I think 200 newspapers around the country?

John Rosemond: It's hard to tell from week to week, about 250, psychologically incorrect commentary. I've been writing a weekly column since March of 1976.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I read someplace that you were in graduate school in the '60s, is that correct?

John Rosemond: Late '60s, early '70s, yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: All right, so was I. I finished my doctorate on April 3rd, 1967. So I'm probably ahead of you. I know I'm older than you-

John Rosemond: About five years, yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: ... but I saw the same thing, and it took my breath away. I saw that a whole new... Quote, new. A whole new concept of children and authority and discipline, all of that came into question, and what I had observed largely from my mother, but from the culture and from the Scripture, was now disrespected and disregarded.

And it was that circumstance, as I went through graduate school, that caused me about the same time that I got out, to sit down and write *Dare to Discipline*, because I was trying to say, "Wait a minute, there's something wrong here," and-

John Rosemond: Right, and you were a voice crying in the wilderness, yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: I was, and I took some flak for it, but that book is still out there, so it must have some substance, and that substance was the Scripture.

John Rosemond: And, well, that book, Jim, had a tremendous impact on me too, because I'd come out of graduate school in the early 1970s completely indoctrinated in the new psychological point of view, which I call postmodern psychological parenting. And to encounter your book in the early 1970s, and to read your book and just understand the common sense of it, was startling to me. It was paradigm-shifting for me, and I've told people for many, many years, and this is not a program for mutual congratulations, but, I mean, you've been a great role model in my career and my life, and I can't express my appreciation enough.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, when you're on the front lines, you enjoy having some fellow travelers out there, some other people who are willing to stand against the tide. What concerns me, John, is that the culture has forgotten those things. I mean, it's even more confused about them now than it was then. I mean, maybe we made a little progress in encouraging parents to implement those principles, but in the culture at large, it's gone. I mean, I'm in the airport, and I'm in markets, and all around, on travels and so on, and I just see parents with no clue as to how to gain control, and build respect, and build a sense of worth in this generation of kids.

John Rosemond: Well, this is because primarily, I think, Jim, we shifted from a family structure that was parent-centered in the 1950s and before, to a family structure that has been child-centered since the early 1970s.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

John Rosemond: And children used to grow up in families where it was understood, the child's job was to pay attention to the parents. And now the implicit understanding and assumption is that it's good parenting to pay as much attention to and do as much for your child as you possibly can do. And one of the things that I tell people as I travel the country is that by age three, a child has intuited one of two conclusions concerning his relationship with his parents.

Conclusion number one, the functional conclusion is, "It is my job," speaking as the child, "to pay attention to them, my parents." Conclusion, number two, "It's their job, quite obviously, to pay attention to and do things for me." You and I are members of the last generation of American children who, by age three, understood it was our job to pay attention to them. These are kids-

Dr. James Dobson: That's the way it's supposed to be.

John Rosemond: That's right. These are kids who are growing up in families who lack that understanding.

Dr. James Dobson: Mm-hmm.

John Rosemond: And when you lack that fundamental understanding, you are going to be difficult to discipline.

Dr. James Dobson: The title of your book. I've indicated this is what we're going to be talking about, is *Parenting by The Book: Biblical Wisdom for Raising Your Child*. You may have been referring here to parenting by this book, or your book, but I don't think.

John Rosemond: No, no, no.

Dr. James Dobson: I think you were saying parenting by The Book-

John Rosemond: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: ... the Word of God, which has a lot to say about children.

John Rosemond: Well, that's why I told my publisher to capitalize the letter T in the word the. They came back to me and they said, "Why do you want..." I said, "It's The Book I'm talking about. This is the Bible. This is a source of eternal truth. God has set forth a plan in the Bible concerning how we should raise children. We're not following that plan in America. That's the root because of our problems. That's what I'm talking about."

Dr. James Dobson: Isn't it amazing how it works? Isn't it amazing how effective that word is when you apply it to children?

John Rosemond: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: I mean, it just is phenomenal to see those principles in effect, and see the consequences for children.

John Rosemond: Yeah. You know, Jim, this is not self-promotion, but I do 200 talks a year all over America, and people will come up to me and tell me, you know, "John, I came and I expected to talk on how I should deal with tantrums, and how I should deal with resistance on the part of my child, and rebellion and talking back," and so on and so forth. And instead, what people hear from me is a description of a point of view that you should carry into the raising of a child. And I'm absolutely convinced, if you carry the right point of view into the raising of a child, and the only right point of view is described in Scripture, you will do the right thing most of the time.

Dr. James Dobson: All right, what is that point of view, and what's the source for it?

John Rosemond: The point of view that's set forth in Scripture is that discipline is the act of discipling the child. It is the act of turning the little tyrant, the toddler, I sometimes call him a little criminal, into a pro-social human being who will look up to you, follow your lead and subscribe to your values.

And I can't emphasize enough to parents in America, you don't do this with behavior modification. You do it through role-modeling and instruction and leadership, and this is what parenting is all about. And these people come up to me and they say, "John, I got it. I left here with a different point of view and it's made all the difference in my family." And it's not my point of view. I'm a messenger. You know that, Jim. We know that.

Dr. James Dobson: Where do you find it in Scripture?

John Rosemond: You find it everywhere in Scripture. You find it even in places where it doesn't refer specifically to children. Ecclesiastes chapter three, verse one, is a good example, "There's a time for everything and a season to every purpose," or activity, depending on translation, "under heaven."

Now, how many people would read that and think that it applies to kids? But it does. It says there's a time for everything, there's a season to every purpose, which means there are seasons to the raising of children, and one of the things I do in *Parenting by the Book* is talk about those seasons and what your purpose as a parent should be in each one of those seasons.

Dr. James Dobson: It is a pleasure to raise children who have been trained according to these principles, and yet you see kids disrespecting the authority of their parents. You

see parents who feel like they're going to damage the children somehow by leading them, by saying, "Let's get something straight here. I'm the parent, you're the child. You will do what I tell you to do, because this is in your best interest, and this is what God tells me to do. So expect it. If you challenge me and you disobey me, I will give you reason to regret it. I mean, we can sit and talk, but there comes a time when you're going to do what I want you to do, because I love you, little one, and I will not do anything to hurt you. I'm trying to get you ready to be an effective adult." There's all kinds of versions of that, but I bet you've given that speech before.

John Rosemond: Sure. Well, the variation that I used to deliver it to my children in was this. "You make your decisions, kids, and then I will make mine." And the understanding was, you make a good decision and I will stay out of your life. You make a bad decision and I'm going to be in your life in a way you don't like it. And I used to tell my kids, "Look, if you want to keep big daddy off your back, all you got to do is do the right thing. It's that simple."

Dr. James Dobson: John, you're threatening these little kids. You are oppressive to these children. You are overbearing. You are taking away their freedom, their individuality. You are warping these kids. Have you ever been charged with-

John Rosemond: Oh, absolutely. I won't mention names, but a parenting, quote, expert, end quote, once in a forum accused me of being hung up on punishment. And you know, Jim, as well as I do, that all of the research says the happiest kids are the most obedient, and vice versa. And I say to parents, "If you want to grow a happy child, a child who is comfortable in his or her own skin, make sure your child is obedient," and the Bible tells you how to do that.

Dr. James Dobson: John, have you ever read the statement about child-rearing that was written by the mother of John and Charles Wesley, the noted evangelists from the 1700s? She had some pretty dramatic things to say about raising children. Have you ever read what she wrote?

John Rosemond: I have never, but I have been referred to a biography and I'm about to expose myself to their lives, and looking forward to it.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I have a short piece that came from a longer statement that she made, but it's written in the language of the 18th century, and it's a little difficult to understand today, but it's right on target. And Susanna Wesley obviously learned some things from raising 17 kids. And I have drawn some of my own perspectives from her longer statement, which I won't take the time to read, but let me just share a paragraph or two from what she had to say.

She wrote, "In order to form the minds of children, the first thing to be done is to conquer the will, and to bring them into an obedient temper. To inform the understanding is a work of time, and must, with children, proceed by slow degrees as they're able to bear it. But the subjecting of the will is a thing which

must be done at once, and the sooner, the better, for by neglecting timely correction, they will contract a stubbornness and an obstinacy which is hardly ever conquered, and never without using such severity as would be painful to me as to the children. In the esteem of the world, those who withhold timely correction would pass for kind and indulgent parents, whom I call cruel parents, who permit their children to get habits which they know must afterward be broken."

She goes on from there, and you can hear the wisdom of this godly mother in what she's writing, and see, I have in my book *Strong-Willed Child* and numerous other places, talked about shaping the will without breaking the spirit, and she's talking here about shaping the will. John, did you agree with what she said?

John Rosemond: You mentioned that she raised 17 children. These women who raised 10, 12, 17 kids prior to the psychological parenting revolution that we're talking about, they brought to the raising of children a calm yet forceful authority. One of the things that I tell my audiences is "I'm a member of the last generation of American children who were blessed to be afraid of their mothers."

And people will look at me, these young people, and I say, "Look, this was a biblical fear." It was a biblical fear. In the Bible, it says, "Fear of the Lord is of benefit to us." It's not of benefit to Him. It's not for His benefit that we fear Him, and the same is true in the parent-child relationship. A child who is biblically afraid of his parents, who is intimidated by their calm, purposeful authority, is a child who is truly blessed.

Dr. James Dobson: I write often about my father, and I had a great relationship with him. And the truth of the matter is, my mother, in the early days, was the far greater influence. My mother really understood discipline, and I was afraid of her, but I also knew she would not harm a hair on my head. She loved me enough to die for me, and she made me know it. She cared about what I thought. She cared about what I felt. And in so many ways, she built a confidence within me that allowed me to compete in life as a man, but I would not take her on, and the few times that I did it, I lived to regret it.

I sassed her, I really...I'll admit, I was about seven, eight years of age and I just said something really disrespectful. I don't remember what it was, but I do remember what she did about it. I remember taking a step back and thinking, "I probably shouldn't have said that." And she reached out to see what she could get a hold of to whack me with, and her hand landed on a girdle. When I spoke in Gastonia, North Carolina, I probably told that story because I can still hear that thing coming. And those were the days when a girdle weighed about 16 pounds.

John Rosemond: Oh, sure, yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, when it had straps all over it, and it came flying through the air, and she caught me across the chest, and then all those straps came around after. I got a whole spanking with one blow. I didn't do that again.

John Rosemond: That's great, Jim.

Dr. James Dobson: I didn't do that again.

John Rosemond: What a great story.

Dr. James Dobson: But I lived in safety because that never happened unless I had asked for it.

John Rosemond: Yeah, absolutely. It wasn't an arbitrary act on your mother's part.

Dr. James Dobson: It was not.

John Rosemond: She had not lost control, not by any means.

Dr. James Dobson: No, she just wasn't going to take it.

John Rosemond: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, you do believe in corporal punishment.

John Rosemond: I have no problem with it at all, per se. I think that you can overdo it, I think that you can do it in a way that is irresponsible, but I have absolutely no problem with it whatsoever, at a per se level. People that old-fashioned parenting, of the type that you and I experienced as kids, was just replete with spankings, that we just got a spanking every other day or something.

There was a poll done about 10 years ago, Jim, and I can't put the finger on the specifics of it, but it was a poll of people our age, thereabouts. One of the questions asked was, "How many times do you estimate that you were spanked in your entire childhood?" Surprisingly to most people, especially people who came after us, the average answer was five. And that's how many times I think I was spanked as a child, was five times. The spanking was not the centerpiece of discipline.

Dr. James Dobson: Right.

John Rosemond: Leadership was the center piece of discipline.

Dr. James Dobson: That's right.

John Rosemond: One of the interesting things that I do, Jim, in my audiences, is I ask, "How many people were raised by a mother who never yelled?" An audience of 500 people, maybe 300 people will raise their hands. And then I say, "Is there a woman in

this audience tonight with children living with her in the home who can say that she has never yelled at her children?" And do you know, there are times when, in a 500-person audience, I'll get no hands up.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that right?

John Rosemond: And my point, I will say, this is what postmodern psychological parenting has caused. It has caused parenting to be a tremendously stressful affair, because we are trying to parent according to a set of rules that don't work, and that have nothing in common whatsoever with the directions that God has clearly given us in His word.

Dr. James Dobson: John, that is so good, and I believe it's absolutely true. There is great concern today about child abuse, and I'm one of the people who are concerned about. It's happening all over the country, and sometimes I get accused of encouraging parental behavior that would lead to child abuse.

The truth is, it's the exact opposite. You tie the hands of parents, you leave them only negotiation as a way to get the child to do what the parent wants them to do, and you to tell them that any overt, physical punishment, or any kind of punishment, whether it's sitting on a chair or going to their room or whatever it is, when you put them in a straitjacket where what they do is going to fail, it leads to overreaction.

John Rosemond: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: It leads to yelling.

John Rosemond: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: It leads to child abuse.

John Rosemond: Yes, it does. It leads-

Dr. James Dobson: It actually is related to child abuse.

John Rosemond: Right, it leads to these huge explosions that take place, and this is one of the consequences of this new parenting, is the buildup, the constant buildup of stress, and then the explosion on the part of the parent. And the studies, Jim, and you know this as well as I do, but I'll just bring it out for the benefit of our listeners, the studies have clearly indicated that children who score highest on measures of emotional and social wellbeing are children whose parents occasionally spank.

Dr. James Dobson: Isn't that interesting?

John Rosemond: Yeah, yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: And there have been a thousand studies that have been faulty, in my view, showing that spanking leads to all kinds of emotional damage. And what they don't explain is that nearly every one of those studies is based on parents who are abusing their kids, and not separating that from those who use it judiciously as a way of reinforcing authority and then saturating the relationship with love. That's a totally different thing.

John Rosemond: Completely different thing, and those studies that you refer to, I wrote a book called *To Spank or Not to Spank*, and I researched a lot of those studies and, Jim, again, I'm not telling you anything you don't know. These are researchers with an agenda, and you cannot do honest research if you-

Dr. James Dobson: That's right.

John Rosemond: ... begin your research with an agenda, with the attempt to prove something. The only legitimate research is done by people who aren't attempting to prove anything, they're attempting to investigate.

Dr. James Dobson: John, isn't it interesting that I was on the West Coast, you were on the East Coast, we had gone through secular training institutions and we met as adults, and we have drawn the same conclusions based on the Scripture and based on our own observations, and they're valid, and they work, and you have many of them in this book, *Parenting by The Book*, parenting by the Word of God. And it's been a pleasure working with you through these years. Let's do another program tomorrow, shall we?

John Rosemond: Let's do.

Dr. James Dobson: All right.

John Rosemond: We'll do it.

Dr. James Dobson: Thanks for being our guest today.

John Rosemond: Jim, I've thoroughly enjoyed it, as usual. Thank you for having me on.

Roger Marsh: You've been listening to Family Talk, and practical and timely advice from our own Dr. James Dobson, and his guest, psychologist and author John Rosemond. In the introduction to his book, *The New Dare to Discipline*, Dr. Dobson writes, "The term discipline is not limited to the context of confrontation. Children also need to be taught self-discipline and responsible behavior. They need assistance in learning how to handle the challenges and obligations of living. In the Bible. God put a clear picture of how parents should train up their children. Discipline and correction, along with care, patience and second chances are all a part of that picture as well."

Now, if you'd like to learn more about John Rosemond, his books, his writings and his parenting tips go to our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. That's drjamesdobson.org/broadcast, or you can give us a call, at (877) 732-6825. Our team would love to hear from you. We're available 24/7, 365 to take your prayer requests, recommend helpful resources and answer any questions you might have about the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Again, our number to call is (877) 732-6825.

Now, make sure you listen to Family Talk again tomorrow, as Dr. Dobson and his good friend, John Rosemond, will continue their helpful discussion about God's wisdom for raising children. Until then, thank you for your support of the JDFI. I'm Roger Marsh, and may God richly bless you and your family.

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