



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** God's Wisdom for Raising Children – Part 2

**Guest(s):** John Rosemond

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Dr. James Dobson: Well, greetings and welcome to Family Talk. I'm your host, Dr. James Dobson and our radio program is a listener supported division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. We call it JDFI. On today's broadcast, you're going to hear the second and final installment of an interview that I conducted some years ago with my friend, the state licensed family counselor and bestselling author, John Rosemond. He has published a column that has been syndicated in many newspapers through the years. And as you may know, I'm also a state licensed psychologist and a licensed marriage, family, and child therapist. So my visit with John made for an enlightening conversation between the two of us.

There is some good practical advice offered in this interview, if I do say so myself and I hope that you'll find it useful. Finally, if you missed part one of this conversation, just go to [dramesdobson.org](http://dramesdobson.org). Here now is part two of a classic discussion that occurred between John Rosemond and me and we were talking about bringing up kids.

Many parents today have a very foggy or imprecised idea of what they want to try to accomplish with their own children and how to raise them and the philosophy that guides those efforts. The culture just seems to have forgotten what past generations took for granted because they understood it from their parents and their grandparents. And that's what we're going to talk about today with our guest John Rosemond, who provides through his writings, a very clear understanding of what we, as moms and dads, are trying to do or should be trying to do on behalf of our kids. And John Rosemond is back with us today, the continuation of the conversation we started last time. He is a family psychologist and has been for many years, and now devotes his time to speaking and writing. He teaches at parenting workshops throughout the country, and he has a column that appears in over 200 newspapers.

And his book is called, *Parenting By the Book, Biblical Wisdom For Raising Your Child*. Because he takes that philosophy I was talking about right out of Scripture. And John, it is really good to have you back with us. It was fun talking to you last time. And as a way of kind of summarizing, I want to ask you to give us that general overview of your approach to parenting. What is it that you're trying to say through the many bestselling books that you've written, including the one that we're going to talk about today, *Parenting By the Book*?

John Rosemond: Well, what I'm trying to get across is that we are hung up in America today on methods when it comes to discipline children. And we should know by now that these methods aren't working and the reason they're not working is because parents are not bringing the right point of view to the raising of children. And I say time and time again, with the wrong point of view, no method is going to work for long. With the right point of view, any method is going to work. It's the point of view that you bring to the raising of a child that is the important ingredient in the equation. And we embraced a wrong point of view concerning the rearing of children in the 1960s and 1970s, a point of view that was not biblically based and we have been paying the price for it ever since.

Dr. James Dobson: With all the harmful influences that are out there today, TV, music, magazines, cell phones, texting, and so many other things, how can parents regain ground in that effort to influence their children? There's a tug of war for the hearts and minds of children today. How can parents equalize their opportunities against this culture that's impinging on the home?

John Rosemond: Parents have always accepted the responsibility of filtering what culture reaches their children and adults have always accepted this responsibility. I'll give you an example. When you and I were kids, we went to the library, the local public library, and we would pick up a book and bring it up to the librarian. There was a chance on occasion that she might say, "I'm not going to let you check out this book. It's not appropriate for an eight-year-old to read." Adults used to accept that responsibility. And I say to parents today, you need to accept this responsibility. Our culture is assaulting, secular culture is assaulting our children through the media and you need to control what media reaches your children, as well as you can, understanding you can't do a perfect job of that. But it's one reason why I tell parents, I don't care if your child is 16-years-old, he should not have his or her own password to the computer. He should not have his or her own private computer terminal in his room-

Dr. James Dobson: Or a TV.

John Rosemond: ... or a TV. It's like letting a child take a walk down a red light district. That's what it is to let a child have a TV or a computer in his or her room. It's a very dangerous thing. Parents need to be, I think, confronted with this responsibility that they have to... Parents today think, "Well, everybody else's kids have these things. I don't have a right to deny my children these things." And I say, "Look, your children's rights are at issue here. Your child's right to grow up to be a morally fit individual is at issue here. This is your responsibility."

Dr. James Dobson: You are implementing that responsibility, not to do something to the child, but to do something for the child-

John Rosemond: For the child, exactly. Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: You mentioned how the culture was when we were younger. I wish that that aspect of our society were still applicable, where I knew as a child, that every adult accepted a certain responsibility to protect me from that which was evil or that which was harmful. And I knew if I did something in the neighborhood that was disrespectful or harmful, my parents would know about it. And a school would tell my parents. So I not only had to circumvent the authority of my parents, but every other adult out there, if I wanted to do what was wrong. That's not there now.

John Rosemond: No, it's not.

Dr. James Dobson: There is not this desire to help parents do their job better. In fact, parents are likely to get jumped on if they do in fact discipline and train and guide their kids.

John Rosemond: Well, they're likely to be looked upon suspiciously by the authorities, at least, Jim. You and I are the last members of the last generation of American children to grow up during a time when everybody was on the same page concerning how children should be raised. Your parents were on the same page, your parents and your teachers were on the same page, your parents and your neighbors were on the same page. And this was such a blessing to us. We may not have liked it at times because we couldn't get away with stuff that we wanted sometimes to get away with. But it was, in retrospect, what a blessing, and this is lacking in today's parenting culture.

Dr. James Dobson: What suggestions would you make to parents to build character in their children?

John Rosemond: Suggestion number one, we've already discussed. Keep the computers and video games and televisions out of their room, number one.

Dr. James Dobson: How you teach them to be honest?

John Rosemond: Honesty is a matter of respect for other people. You are an honest person because you respect other people. And the way to teach children respect from a very early age, is to put them in positions of responsibility in the family, where they learn to exercise obligation to other people beginning with their obligations to other members of their family, simply because they are a member of the family.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. And modeling. They're watching you every minute. They see what you do, compromises in what you believe and what you have tried to teach are counterproductive. They argue against each other and we have an obligation to represent what we believe before our children.

John Rosemond: And that's what it says in Deuteronomy 6, verses 6 and 7. At every possible opportunity, talk to your children about these commandments. And what that means is to explain to your children why you're doing what you're doing and to

rest your explanation on the eternal truth of God's word. The emphasis there is on teaching your children. And this is again, I come back to this over and over again. Discipline is about the discipling of the child. And you do this through proper instruction and role modeling in your values.

Dr. James Dobson: John, you say, in this book that children should actually be somewhat intimidated by their parents.

John Rosemond: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: A lot of people are going to argue with you about that. I'm not one of them, explain it.

John Rosemond: Well, every effective leader intimidates the people that he leads and he intimidates them not by yelling and screaming and threatening and getting red in the face. He intimidates them with his natural, confident poise and purpose. And that's what I'm saying to parents. Look, if you intimidate your children through yelling and screaming, that's not intimidation. That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about bringing a calm, confident poise to your parenting, where your children know you are completely comfortable with your authority as a parent and that is going to be intimidating to your child.

Dr. James Dobson: There is so much confusion about this subject in the culture. It's not surprising that mothers and fathers often disagree with regard to discipline. What is your advice to those that just are having a hard time coming to terms?

John Rosemond: If you put your children at the center of attention in the family, the likelihood of disagreement between husband and wife concerning the children is exaggerated considerably. If you put your marriage first and your relationship with your children second, the likelihood of disagreement concerning parenting issues is minimized as much as it can possibly be. Two people can't agree perfectly on any set of things, but you can agree on 99% of child rearing matters, if you function as husband and wife first and his mother and father second.

Dr. James Dobson: One of the things that I've observed with what we've been talking about here is that it is very common to have one parent growing up understanding intuitively the things we're talking about, about parental authority and parental leadership and taking charge of a child and holding the individual accountable, all those kind of things that you described last time as being a way of thinking about children, which really comes out of Scripture. But the other spouse did not grow up with it. Never saw it. The parents never exercised it. They have no clue of how to do that, or even why they ought to and their approach is naturally permissive, which feels pretty loving. I just want to love you. Let me hug you and I don't want you to be unhappy or not to get what you want, and I want to give you as much freedom as I possibly can.

And then when the child turns around and looks you in the eye and says, "I'm not going to do what you want me to do. And I don't even think I like you anyway." They have no idea how to deal with that. And so then you've got the mom and dad on a collision course, because one understands it and the other doesn't. There has to be a moment when they can get together outside the child's hearing and say, "Can we find a way to deal with this? Because we're going to really damage this child." I'm rattling on here. Let me just say this-

John Rosemond: You're not rattling on at all-

Dr. James Dobson: I have observed through the years, that the combination of parenting approaches that I just described, produces the most aggressive, hostile, disobedient teenagers, because they've grown up disrespecting both role models. They lean in opposite directions. They contradict each other and you must not do that.

John Rosemond: Because when you, as husband and wife, don't agree on how to raise the children because you're spending too much time in the roles of mother and father, and you've let the roles of husband and wife slide into the background, almost to a non-existent state. When you do that, your children can manipulate you. And when your children can manipulate you, they don't respect you. They take you for granted and they try and get from you what they can. And so I say to parents all over America, "Look, the ideal situation would be if young people about to get married, sat down before they were married and said, 'Let's come to terms over how we're going to raise our children before we even tie the knot.'"

Dr. James Dobson: That doesn't happen though, does it, very often?

John Rosemond: Not very often.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you have people come to you before they're married and say, "John, give us some advice. How are we going to deal with our children?"

John Rosemond: Well, I don't have people because I'm not in private practice, Jim, any longer, I left private practice in 1992. But I have people who come to my public presentations quite often, who are married or about to get married, don't have children. And I see that as a beacon of hope in our cultures' future that maybe these young people are realizing that even the way they were raised, wasn't really a functional way of being raised. And they want to do a better job and they're interested as much as they can be, in doing it differently and doing it better.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I have found that individuals don't feel the need for that advice until they run into difficulty-

John Rosemond: Most people don't.

Dr. James Dobson: ... and it's after their child is driving them crazy or is obviously in serious trouble that they come and say, "Help me. What's going on here?" But when couples are about to become parents, they think they know, it looks a whole lot easier than it is. Doesn't it? It looks like all you got to do is love them. Well, it turns out that there's a little more.

John Rosemond: There's a little more, and what we're talking about is grandma's old saying that, "A ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure." The time to deal with all of this is before you have a child and I also put it this way, "Strike while the iron is cold."

Dr. James Dobson: Now you have seven grandkids.

John Rosemond: Seven ranging in age from, as we speak 13 months to 13 years.

Dr. James Dobson: Are the principles different for grandparents?

John Rosemond: In a sense. The principles are not different, but my wife and I give ourselves, Jim, quite admittedly, a little more latitude. I'll give you one story. Our grandchildren obey us. They understand. We've never had to raise our voice with our grandchildren. We just tell them the way it is. Our oldest grandchild, who's now 13 and one of the finest young men, I've got to say, I've ever seen his age in my life. Jack, he was two-years-old, my wife, Willie and I, we used to let him come over to our house and climb up on the coffee table and jump to the sofa.

And every time he came to our house, he would climb up on the coffee table and jump to the sofa and then get off and get up on the coffee table and jump to the sofa. And Willie and I would stand there and clap and hoot and holler. And it was just great fun. So one day his mother brings him over, Nancy brings him over and he runs straight for the coffee table, jumps up on the coffee table and jumps over to the sofa. And Nancy says, "Jack, you don't do that." And I turned to her and I said, "Oh no, we let him do it." And she said, "Well, we don't let him do it in our house." And I said, "And you shouldn't."

Dr. James Dobson: Who would've thought you were a permissive grandfather?

John Rosemond: The joys of grandparents. Yeah. One of the things that I sometimes recommend to parents is a consequence that I call, kicking them out of the Garden of Eden and kicking them out of the Garden of Eden is the child comes home from school one day and there's nothing in his room except a bed, a desk, a lamp, and a chest of drawers and essential clothing. And he's told that he's going to live this way until his attitude improves and is improved for at least a month. And then he'll begin to get things back on a trial basis-

Dr. James Dobson: How cruel.

John Rosemond: How cruel. How inhumane. The mother of a four-year-old child called me a couple of years ago and said, her daughter refused to use the toilet, four years old, still using diapers. And I described this procedure to her. I said, "Get rid of the diapers. When she comes home today from preschool, nothing in her room. And you just tell her, 'This is how you're going to live until you use the toilet. And you've used it successfully for at least a month.'" And the girl came home and the mother called me a half an hour later and said, "John, she's just in her room, screaming bloody murder." And I said, "Well, it's been 30 minutes. She has every right to scream bloody murder, her life has turned upside down."

And two hours later, she called me back again and she said, "She calmed down finally. She came to the door of her room and she said, 'Mom, I want to use the toilet.'" And the girl has never had what I call an on purpose. Some people would call them accidents. The girl never had on purpose from that moment on. And I tell people, you've got to invoke what I call the godfather principle when you're invoking consequences. And that is, you make them an offer they can't refuse. Don Vito Corleone.

Dr. James Dobson: And it might involve something unpleasant.

John Rosemond: It might involve something unpleasant.

Dr. James Dobson: And that's not going to warp them.

John Rosemond: I've been doing this now, Jim, you've been doing it longer than me. I didn't mean to-

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, it's true.

John Rosemond: ... reveal that.

Dr. James Dobson: It's true.

John Rosemond: I've been doing this now almost as long as you and you and I have been doing it since the 1970s and before and I have never had a parent and neither have you, I'll dare say, never had a parent come to me and say that anything that I recommended caused their child harm. The feedback that I've gotten and that you've gotten, has been universally positive. And the reason for that is, it's not due to you and me. It's due to the fact that we rest our principles and our advice on eternal truth.

Dr. James Dobson: Which is the reference made in the title to your book, *Parenting By the Book, Biblical Wisdom For Raising Your Child*. We got time just for this last comment, John. There is a serious problem with child abuse in this country. And there are parents who are doing terrible things to children, but good biblical approaches to parenting are not mean, they are not harsh. They are not oppressive. They do not result in any kind of harm, psychological or physical to a child. When you

implement them, there is peace and harmony in the camp. When you are in charge as a parent, and you're willing to defend that authority, the child is comfortable with that and moves within it. And if you are doing a lot of screaming and yelling and a whole lot of spanking and whacking and all that, you are on the wrong track and you might harm that child.

John Rosemond: Well, and you're absolutely right, Jim, and to any parent who needs comfort, Jesus said, "Those of you who feel heavy laden and burden, come to me." And I would say to any parent who needs comfort, to any parent who feels that parenting is a burden, go to the Lord and begin by going to His word.

Dr. James Dobson: Boy, that is a great note to end on because I don't care how wise you are as a parent. I don't care how many books you've read and how much you think you know about children. You still need prayer.

John Rosemond: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: It is a complex assignment in this culture, particularly. John, you're a good man. Thanks for coming back to be with us. I always enjoy talking to you. There's so much that we could discuss, and I appreciate you writing this book. Come see us again when you're back in this neighborhood.

John Rosemond: I'll be sure and do that, Jim. You're a great gentleman and a great citizen and a great American, thank you so much.

Roger Marsh: Well, you've just heard the conclusion of Dr. Dobson's two part conversation with his friend, fellow author and psychologist, John Rosemond, here on Family Talk. Their conversation focused on John's work, *Parenting By the Book, Biblical Wisdom For Raising Your Child*. John is a well-known columnist, author and speaker, who encourages parents to raise their kids using love and leadership. To find out more about John Rosemond, his writing and his parenting advice, visit [drjamesdobson.org/broadcast](http://drjamesdobson.org/broadcast). That's [drjamesdobson.org/broadcast](http://drjamesdobson.org/broadcast), or give us a call at (877) 732-6825.

Now January is almost over, so I want to remind you that this month has been Sanctity of Human Life month here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute and we've produced a resource for you just for the occasion. It's a three track CD featuring conversations with pro-life leaders, Kristan Hawkins, and Dr. Robert and Carlotta Jackson. You'll hear three riveting encouraging programs when you request our special, "Standing Strong For Life," three track CD. Just go to [drjamesdobson.org/standforlife](http://drjamesdobson.org/standforlife), to request your copy today.

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because of listeners like you, that we can continue to stand strong for the family and to defend righteousness in the public square. For more information on how you can stand with us financially, go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). Well, I'm Roger Marsh. Hope you'll join us again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hi everyone, this is Dr. Tim Clinton here for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. The news comes in all kinds of shapes, sizes and formats these days, but how do you cut through the noise and get to the heart of the matters that affect your family? Come to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and sign up for Dr. Dobson's monthly newsletter. You'll find clarity on tough issues, encouragement for your everyday life and trusted principles to help you build strong, healthy, connected families. Go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). Sign up today. That's [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org).