



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Ministering to the Elderly – Part 2

Guest(s): Missy Tate & Danae Dobson

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Dr. Dobson: Hello, everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, a radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and thank you for joining us for this program.

Roger Marsh: From an early age, we are taught to respect our elders. However, that lesson also includes caring for those older people in the later years of their lives as well. In just a moment, we're going to continue our discussion from yesterday, which was about ministering to the elderly. Last time, you heard Dr. Dobson's classic interview on this subject with the Lake Christian artist, Missy Tate. Today, Dr. Dobson is joined in studio by his daughter, Danae, who also has a heart for encouraging the elderly. Now, before we get started, Family Talk's previous co-host, LuAnne Crane, was a part of the original conversation so you'll hear her jump in from time to time throughout the interview. With that, here now is Dr. Dobson to introduce his very special guest.

Dr. Dobson: I am so pleased to have my daughter, Danae Dobson as our guest today. Danae is an author of 23 books, including, I think her best, *Let's Talk! Good Stuff for Girlfriends about God, Guys, and Growing Up*. That book has sold over 100,000 copies and it's especially designed for teenage girls, which makes sense.

LuAnne Crane: And we've actually had her on this broadcast talking about that, Doctor.

Dr. Dobson: We certainly have. She is also the author of a sequel to that book called, *Let's Walk the Talk!* Subtitle is, *Girlfriend to Girlfriend on Faith, Friendship, and Finding Real Love*. Danae is also an accomplished speaker in mother-daughter banquets and other kinds of events, and she's represented by the Ambassador Speakers Bureau in Nashville, Tennessee. Danae, it's been quite a long time since you were here, six months or more. And I appreciate you coming by for a visit.

Danae Dobson: Oh, well, it's my privilege. It was actually LuAnne's idea to invite me to talk about the topic we're going to be covering today. So thank you, LuAnne.

LuAnne Crane: Well, I know it's close to your heart, Danae. I'm excited about what you're going to share.

Dr. Dobson: LuAnne, we need to bring everybody up to speed. Yesterday, we did a program called Ministering to the Elderly and that featured Missy Tate. I thought that was an excellent broadcast. She was talking about the needs of elderly people and how we can help to meet their deep needs for friendship, and care, and spiritual counsel. And Danae, I know that is a subject very dear to your heart. In fact, I wrote about you and that concern for the elderly in my book, *Bringing Up Girls*. I'm going to read a paragraph from that book. I said about you, "Danae has a very tender spirit and I wouldn't have it be any other way, it's why she has been daddy's girl since he was born. It also explains why she regularly visits lonely, elderly people who languish in nursing homes. She genuinely cares for them, and that makes me very proud of her. Danae's compassionate and gentle temperament is not unusual among members of her gender." And then I went on to talk about girls generally. This is a ministry for you, isn't it Danae?

Danae Dobson: It is. The Lord has blessed me with the ability to relate to people of all different age groups, whether the very young or the very old. And the elderly in particular, I have felt a specific calling to from the Lord.

Dr. Dobson: Now, you have worked with the pastor of Congregational Care at our church in Pasadena, his name is Willis Gray. And you have gone with him for a number of years to make some of these visits in nursing homes and in other places. A lot of young people don't really want to go into places like that because they can be somewhat depressing. What happens to you when you go there?

Danae Dobson: Well, pastor Willis has gone on visitation for more than 60 years and he has visited people in retirement facilities, in hospitals, people who are shut-ins, people who cannot get out anymore. And about 15 years ago, pastor Willis asked me if I would like to go on his rounds with him. So once a month, I started going with him on visitation and I've been doing that now for all these years. And it's just been such a blessing for me, even though I never set out to try to receive any personal gain, but that's often how the Lord works.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah. You wind up being the one that benefits from being there.

Danae Dobson: Right. In fact, in the course of the past 15 years, I've been prayed over by a 95 year old retired pastor, I've been doused with holy water by an elderly woman with a Catholic background. There was water literally pouring down my jacket and I was trying not to laugh, but she was determined that she was going to bless me. I've been served chocolate candy and Coke. I've laughed, I've cried, I've heard fascinating stories. So it's amazing how the Lord blesses me unexpectedly when the last person I'm thinking about is myself.

Dr. Dobson: What happens when you're there? Sometimes the older people are not terribly communicative. What do you do when you go there?

Danae Dobson: Well, we generally stay about 10-30 minutes and we let them talk about whatever they want discuss. But we never leave before praying with them. And

that was something that I had to learn from pastor Willis because before starting visitation with him, I never felt comfortable praying with people in the moment whom I didn't know very well. And just seeing how pastor Willis would always put his hand on someone's shoulder or arm and just pray that God would heal them, bless them, I got to the point where I was comfortable doing that too. So now I can do that with ease. Whenever pastor Willis turns to me and says, "Danae, will you pray for Bob? Or, "Alice?" Or ... I can just go right into praying a prayer for their safety, and protection, and health.

LuAnne Crane: Well, and Danae, You mentioned 10-30 minutes. See, that's something any of us can do. I think we tend to avoid these things because we think, "I can't stay there for an hour and carry on a conversation, it'll get awkward." But you're saying some of these folks, you literally spend 10 minutes with and that blesses their whole day.

Danae Dobson: It does. It does. And their faces just light up when we walk into their rooms.

Dr. Dobson: And then you get acquainted with them and they become your friends, don't they?

Danae Dobson: That's right. Yes.

LuAnne Crane: It just blesses me, Doctor. And the reason I'm so glad that Danae is here is because here she is in the prime of her life, multi-talented. You read her bio, she's an author, speaker, could be doing literally anything. And Danae, the fact that you've chosen to invest your life, your heart, your friendship, your time in the care and the love of the elderly, just blesses me. And I appreciate that.

Danae Dobson: Aww. Thank you, LuAnne. Well, like I said, I get blessed in return. So it's just neat how the Lord always works that out.

Dr. Dobson: Danae, you have also made it your goal to win older people to the Lord if they don't know Him, right?

Danae Dobson: That has happened before. Most of the people whom we visit are already Christians, but I have had an opportunity to lead a 90 year old man to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. And that's such an exhilarating feeling just to know that he will be there in eternity. And it doesn't matter that he lived the first 90 years without Christ, he came to know the Lord later in life and he's going to be there.

Dr. Dobson: Now, I know the person you're talking about. I've only met him once, but I know who it is and we're not going to name him. But he has a lifetime of experience that you have now found interesting.

Danae Dobson: Extremely. Yes. I'll name him Frank. Frank has just given me his time and just shared so many fascinating stories with me about World War II in particular. He

is a 93 year old World War II vet, and he's showed me his Purple Heart, he's pulled out books and pointed out different things to me about D-Day. He was actually injured during the Battle of the Bulge. So the other day he pulled out a book and he was showing me different pictures, and one of the black and white photos featured a number of American troops walking under a bridge. Frank pointed out the bridge and he said, "I remember that. I remember walking under that bridge." And I just thought that was so fascinating, something that happened 65 years ago and he's telling me, "I was there."

Dr. Dobson: He loves you too, doesn't he, Danae?

Danae Dobson: I think so. Yes.

Dr. Dobson: And you enjoy going over to see him. What is there about your personality that you enjoy talking to, and affirming, and praying with elderly people that the most of the rest of the world looks right past?

Danae Dobson: Elderly people have so many gifts, Dad, that they can share with those of us who are younger. And one of them is their wisdom. They have a lifetime of wisdom to share. And in fact, a good question to ask those who are elderly is, "What is the greatest lesson that God has taught you?" They have 80 or 90 years to reflect back upon and to think about what they've learned about the Lord during that time.

LuAnne Crane: Danae, that's interesting. I'm sitting here looking at a Scripture in Job. It's Job 12:12, and it says, "Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?" I mean, that's Scriptural. The Word of God says that over and over again, that the white hair graces those with wisdom and that we are to respect the elderly. And that's what we're living out, that's what we're called to do.

Dr. Dobson: But in our culture, this is a place where youth is valued, and people who have lived a little longer are just ignored. It is sad.

LuAnne Crane: We think they're out of sync. They probably don't know how to run a computer, don't even know what an iPad or an iPhone is, something like that. So we deem them unnecessary and out of touch, and it's easy to overlook.

Dr. Dobson: But you told us before we went on the air, that when you were a teenager, when you were young, you visited nursing homes and you really found them depressing.

LuAnne Crane: Well, actually I worked in a nursing home, Doctor. My very first job as a 16 year old was right across the street from our home, and it was a traditional nursing home. So there was a lot of elder care needed there. And I worked in their kitchen. I was 16 years old, but I remember just the sense of depression, and lack of care, and just the oppression that seemed to weigh heavy over that. And

I wasn't anxious to return a lot. It seemed like there was a lot of pity, and death and dying there. So as a teenager, that lodged in my mind as a place, I didn't really want to go a lot.

Dr. Dobson: Danae, your mom has been talking to us about the three weeks she spent in rehab after her knee surgery. Shirley was talking about the people who were around her, and they were nearly all older than she, and really had sad stories to tell. Some of them had nobody who came to visit them. Shirley had just [crosstalk] array of people who were coming in to be with her and see here. We have many, many physician friends in this area and one doctor right after another came to see her, not for medical reasons, but just to find out how she was doing. But that was not true of the people around her. Talk about what she said to you and me.

Danae Dobson: Yes, mom was sharing that she saw a number of people just sitting in wheelchairs with their heads hanging down, and people lying in their beds with nobody coming to visit them. And so mom tried to befriend them. She would walk into their rooms, talk to them, show love to them, and even witness and pray for them.

LuAnne Crane: That sounds like Shirley.

Danae Dobson: She tried to be a light and an example. And on the day that she left, there was a woman who had a numb leg. And as my mom was walking out of the facility, she hobbled up to my mom and she said, "Thank you so much for coming in and talking to me, you'll never know how much that meant to me." She also shared with me about the woman who couldn't hear or speak, and she had a chalkboard on her nightstand and that was the only way that she would communicate. People would write messages to her and she would write messages back. And those are the kinds of people that you find in places like that, and they just lie there and nobody ever comes to visit them.

LuAnne Crane: Talk a little more about that, Danae, because there are some physical obstacles that we have to overcome. Some of us are a little fearful of going into a nursing home or a facility like this because we don't know if they can hear us, if they can see, and their physical ailments. How do you get over that?

Danae Dobson: Well, as I mentioned earlier, I started going on visitation with the pastor of Congregational Care from my church.

LuAnne Crane: That's a great idea, go with a mentor so you're not on your own the first time.

Danae Dobson: Right. Yes. Get involved with your church to minister to the elderly, either within your church or possibly going on rounds like I've done with my pastor, and visit people from the church who are in hospitals and retirement facilities.

Dr. Dobson: Danae, you were talking about going with the pastor of Congregational Care, great title. But what about the fact that most people who are in nursing facilities or rehab facilities don't even have family members that come to see them? It is amazing. They go for six months or a year- Maybe their family is located 1,000 miles away. I don't know. But whatever reason they are left there alone, that would depress anybody.

Danae Dobson: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah. To be forgotten, it's so sad.

Dr. Dobson: You just think of the memories that they have that they can't share with anybody because there's no one they know who remembers those same things. My heart really does go out to these folks. And Danae, for you to care, I can't tell you what that means to me.

Danae Dobson: Aww. Thanks, dad.

Dr. Dobson: For you to reach out to people you don't even know with a message of hope, and love, and care, and then to pray with them. I can't think of a ministry that would be much more fulfilling than that.

Danae Dobson: It really is. And I just want to encourage the listeners to reach out to elderly people within their own families, or maybe outside their families.

LuAnne Crane: Well, that raises a good point, doctor. A lot of people who have elderly relatives are in that, what we call sandwich generation, where you have younger children yourself, but then you have older parents or grandparents to care for. And a lot of people listening right now are really struggling with that. The reality is their time is torn.

Dr. Dobson: Yes, and younger people are busy. I mean, I understand that. And I don't want to dump guilt on everybody who isn't participating in this same kind of ministry. But it is one that's desperately needed. Danae, I think where you got into this sensitivity to those who were older was with your own grandparents. Because you began to realize they needed you to come see them, too.

Danae Dobson: I did. The very first time that I ever visited my grandparents on my own, it was back in the early 1990s. I remember the day that I was going down there for dinner, mom called me up earlier in the day and she said, "You wouldn't believe how excited your grandparents are that you're coming down. It's like princess Diana coming to visit. Grandma's made barbecue meatballs and baked a pecan pie, and they are just so thrilled that you're coming to see them." I had no idea it meant that much to them.

LuAnne Crane: Well, and you're not just going with your parents. This was your first solo visit, and that gives such value to them that you chose to come and see them.

Danae Dobson: Yes, it really did. And I don't think dad would mind me sharing that he and mom, through no fault of their own, have had to lead such a fast-paced life with all the different ministries, and all the obligations. And they bent over backwards through the years to make time for Ryan and me, and they did a great job of that. But they had to go 200 miles an hour, and my grandparents-

LuAnne Crane: He still does.

Danae Dobson: I know. And my grandparents, by way of contrast, had all the time in the world. When I would go down to visit them, they would keep one eye on the clock and one on the television set. And if I was a little late, they were calling, "Where are you?" So, they had the time to sit and play board games, and watch Lawrence Welk, and have heart-to-heart chats just on a daily basis.

Dr. Dobson: And LuAnne, I will say this about Danae. Shirley's mother lived to be 97, and she got to the point where she couldn't talk much and she couldn't hear at all. And she had many needs that required care, including washing her, and keeping her clean, and changing your bed clothes, and providing food for her, and feeding her, and all of that. And Danae did that every week, all the way to her death. It was inspiring to see.

LuAnne Crane: An act of love.

Dr. Dobson: Shirley's brother, John Deere, also gave himself completely to his mother. So, in our family we did a reach out in that way. Shirley's stepdad was gone by that time and Shirley flew to California to be with her mother every month, month after month after month. But Danae impressed me more than I can tell you, to go and minister to a very sick woman who maybe didn't smell real good, and to love her, and care for her. Danae, I'll never forget that.

Danae Dobson: Well, thank you, Dad. I appreciate that it made such an impact on you. But it was my grandmother, I loved being with my grandmother. And I do have to say, though, it's so important to invest that time because people who are elderly are not going to be with us for a long period of time. And in as much as I succeeded with my grandmother, I felt like I failed with her sister, my Aunt Lila. Because she didn't have any children and she lived alone. And now that she's passed on, I just felt like I could have done so much more in terms of calling her and going to see her. She was very social and she was the one who was doing most of the calling. And when I look back on that, I just realize I could have done more. And I have regret. So, I don't want anybody to get to that point where a loved one is gone and you regret that you didn't spend more time with them when you could have.

LuAnne Crane: Well, Doctor, that raises a good point. Some people avoid the elderly because we do fear death. And to be honest, a lot of the people in that age group, we don't want to get close to them and become friends with them and then walk in one day and they've passed away. That's a very real possibility.

Dr. Dobson: Because you might lose them.

LuAnne Crane: Right. We don't want to be that close to it. How do you deal with that, Danae?

Danae Dobson: I would have to quote what pastor Willis says when people ask him that question, and that is that God gives him the strength to visit people and to deal with their passing when the time comes. And another thing that he mentioned of all the times that he's gone into hospitals and retirement facilities, he said it's like, he's been insulated. He hardly ever gets sick. When you consider going into those places with all the germs. I mean, the Lord protects him.

LuAnne Crane: And does it bring heaven just a little closer for you?

Danae Dobson: Definitely. Yes, it does.

Dr. Dobson: So you're the one that comes away with a blessing?

Danae Dobson: I do, and I don't set out to get blessed at all. When pastor Willis and I pray before going on visitation, we often say, "Lord, help us to minister to the people we're going to call on today, help us to be a blessing." And then I'll come away thinking, "Wow, that was so refreshing. I feel so blessed."

LuAnne Crane: Danae, before we close out here, I'm very aware that there is someone listening right now who is elderly and is in a nursing home and feels lonely, and abandoned, and neglected and their family is not coming to visit. Do you have a word for them?

Danae Dobson: I do. I just want to encourage that individual that, God loves you with an everlasting love, and you are valuable, and you have so much to share. I mean, even with people in the facility where you reside, you have time to give, you have wisdom to share, you have stories and experiences to tell. And there are people around you who want to hear. And also, if you're in a position where you don't have the physical strength to get out, to drive, to go places anymore, you still have a ministry. You can still pray. You can pray for your family members, your friends, people you know in the retirement facilities or even in the hospitals where you unfortunately may be. But you have a ministry. You still have a calling, and that is to pray for those who are around you."

Dr. Dobson: And LuAnne, one of the greatest blessings that I have ever received is when somebody has given what we call a widow's mite gift. And then I will try to call them when I can and I get them on the phone and I say, "I'm calling just to thank you for your gift. I don't want anything from you. In fact, I'd like to know if there's anything I can do for you?" Almost inevitably, that person will say, "Oh no, Dr. Dobson. I just want to pray for you. I want to minister to you. I don't need anything, my needs are met here." But in fact, they're often not, because of the need for human contact. Everybody needs that. And I would like to make a closing appeal to our listeners to give a little time, a little time to those who

have this enormous need for a conversation, and for spiritual information, and just love. God will bless you for it.

Danae Dobson: I remember that our good friend Al Sanders shared one time that he accidentally called somebody by mistake. He dialed the wrong number and it was an elderly woman. And he said, "Oh, I'm sorry. I have the wrong number." And he started to hang up and she said, "Wait, please don't hang up. No one ever calls me. Would you just talk to me for a while?" I mean, there are people like that all over the place, and it's important to remember that.

Dr. Dobson: It can't be said any better than that, Danae. LuAnne, do you see why I love this girl?

LuAnne Crane: I do. And I see why everybody lights up when she walks in.

Dr. Dobson: Danae, thanks for being with us and thanks for sharing your passion. I think people can see why I wrote about you in my book, because you really have a gift that the Lord has given you. And then of course, other gifts too of writing and speaking, and we're going to invite you back.

Danae Dobson: Aww, thank you, dad. You're my biggest fan and I'm yours.

LuAnne Crane: I think that's clear to everybody.

Roger Marsh: Well, this certainly has been a very touching edition of Family Talk, featuring Dr. Dobson's conversation with his daughter, Danae. Now, I know this topic has not been an easy one to listen to over these past couple of days, but we hope that it challenges and encourages you to look for opportunities to minister to the elderly in your community. Now, you can learn more about Danae's books that Dr. Dobson just mentioned by going to today's broadcast page at dr.jamesdobson.org. That's D-R, jamesdobson, .O-R-G. Thanks so much for listening to these insightful programs and your faithful and consistent support of this ministry. Be sure to tune in again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Have a blessed day.

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