



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Building Hedges Around Your Marriage – Part 2

Guest(s): Jerry Jenkins

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- Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute, supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.
- Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh and today we are continuing a discussion on the topic of protecting your marital relationship. Here, now, is a story from today's guest. It's an example of how devastating not protecting your marriage can be.
- Jerry Jenkins: I remember again in my childhood, I knew a couple of couples at our church that would socialize together and they did this for years. And it was just known that the husband of one of the couples and the wife of the other would tease each other flirtatiously in front of the other of their spouses and it was just funny. Everybody thought it was funny. But then one of the couples went through a little rocky period and the woman said to the guy, just asked him if he was ever serious about his little comments. Well, he liked the sound of that and they got more flirtatious, broke up both marriages, got married and of course that marriage didn't last. Now he got three marriages broken. And you talk about chaos, kids on every side. And it all started with what people thought was innocent flirting.
- Roger Marsh: That was Dr. Dobson's guest for today's program, author and speaker, Jerry B. Jenkins. Jerry is a New York Times best-selling author and co-author of the famous *Left Behind* series with Dr. Tim LaHaye. Jerry B. Jenkins previously worked at the Moody Bible Institute as the vice president of publishing and also board chairman. Today, Jerry will discuss with Dr. Dobson how to go about properly setting hedges with your spouse. They both will also emphasize the importance of building defenses, especially due to the easy access of pornography, which is a huge problem today. Now, before we get started, I want to caution parents that today's program contains content that is not meant for younger listeners, so parental discretion is advised. And now, let's join Dr. James Dobson and author Jerry B. Jenkins for part two of this classic conversation right here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, the theme of your book, again, is hedges. It's building those protective structures around marriage so that you won't fall into grievous sin or adultery. Tell me something, how do you explain that to your wife? How do you tell her what you're doing and why? Is she going to understand that? And what words do you use to say, "I'm attracted to the women who are around me. I see them and they smell good and they look good and their hair's done nice and I'm aware of that, so I'm trying in every way I can to protect our marriage." How can you convey that without implying that she ought to be insecure about this?

Jerry Jenkins: It's very difficult, especially for young wives who are not aware of how men think. And I think what you have to do is really rehearse this and prepare and be prepared to give the solution with the problem. For one thing, you have to realize that you're really instructing someone who is not aware of how men think. And so you say, "I have temptations and I have things that can bother my thought life. The point is I want to be faithful. I want to honor you, I want to honor Christ, I want to protect our reputations and so here's what I'm going to do."

Men know their wives and they might realize they're scaring them to death sometimes when they do this, but you really have to be open. And I would much rather be able to say to my wife, even when I was a newlywed, "I've been a Christian most of my life and I'm mature and I've arrived and I'm above this and I don't look at other women and I got it all together." And especially, as you grow older in the faith and you become more of a public person in ministry, I would much rather stand in front of crowds and say, "All this is beneath me and it's disgusting how men look at women."

Sorry, you got the wrong guy. I have to say I'm still planting hedges and I'll still, this thing that Paul writes to Timothy about fleeing youthful lust can be one of the most freeing things when you really think about it. In so many ways men love to take on a challenge. If I'm an angry person or if I'm a sloppy person or if I'm a lazy person, "I'm going to turn over a new leaf. I'm going to study. I'm going to read. I'm going to get motivated. I'm going to get up earlier. I'm going to fix this." We're not told to fix this. We're not told to stand and fight. We're not even told to pray about it. We're supposed to run. We get to flee. So, the temptation comes and I go, "All right, I'm going to look, but I'm not going to lust. And I'm going to do this." Here I get to run, flee, head for the hills. It's very freeing to be able to say, "I don't have to do this on my own."

Dr. James Dobson: Would you agree, Jerry, that some of what we've been talking about and this explanation to your spouse, to your wife, it depends on how you do it?

Jerry Jenkins: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: I am convinced that some men use that information to gain power in their wife's life. In other words saying, "Boy, there are a lot of good-looking women at work and they flirt with me all the time and what they're saying is, 'You better treat me right,' because I have other alternatives and you got competition out there."

So, it's all in the way you do it. You can convey insecurity to your wife very, very easily at that point.

Jerry Jenkins: And you can do it very subtly. It doesn't have to be that overt and yet she gets to the point. And this is another one of my hedges. I think it's important to remind your spouse frequently that you remember your wedding vows and be specific. Sometimes I'll write on a card, it might be an anniversary or birthday or just an any-day card, "Keeping you only unto myself for as long as we both shall live." I want her to know I remember saying it, I'm still following it, it means a lot to me and I don't think you can remind your spouse of that often enough.

Dr. James Dobson: And divorce is so very, very common today. I'm not sure how people get around those vows as easily as they do. I'm not condemning everybody who's gotten a divorce. Some people are the victims of adultery and the Bible does address that, but it does seem to me to be rather casual in many contexts.

Jerry Jenkins: It is, and I think one of the problems is that these vows, even the phrase I used, "Keeping you only unto myself," it's got a bit of a King James language feel to it and it's all part of the formality in the ceremony and all the things that go with that. And I've often said that I realized we're not going to hear this in a wedding. A pastor's not going to stop and say, "Now, do you realize what you just said? You just said you're not going to sleep with anybody else as long as you live." It would be tacky. You wouldn't want to hear that in a wedding, but that's the vow that gets broken.

And since I wrote this book, I often get called from couples that we know who are going through trouble and usually it's too late. Usually there's already been adultery, but I find that I tend to have, especially if I was at the wedding, I tend to be bolder and I'll say... And usually I'm sure you've seen this happen, people set aside their whole system values to explain it, "I was wrong the first time I got married, I was disobedient to God, but now He's brought this new person in my life. It's God's fault."

Dr. James Dobson: You refer to that in your book as excuses.

Jerry Jenkins: Exactly. And, "He blessed me with the new relationship." But I often say to these people, "I was there. I heard you say this was something you'd never do, so let's at least put it on the table. You're breaking your promise, you're breaking your vow. Now, if you want to try to explain why, that's one thing, but let's call it what it's."

Dr. James Dobson: I wrote about that in my book, *Love Must Be Tough*, and there are three or four almost inevitable things that people say when they get into an affair, because that's very guilt inducing. That has to be handled in some way. And so they say, "First of all, I didn't love you in the beginning. We should never have gotten married." So, that turns it from an abandonment into a mistake. The second is, "This is really going to be hard for you right now. I know that, I feel bad about

that, but in the long run it will be better for you too, because we have a loveless marriage. And then it's also better for the children. I know it's hard now, but you'll find somebody else." They get it all rationalized. And finally, "I've prayed about it and God told me that this is what I should do." Oh, man, that one gets me by the throat.

Jerry Jenkins: I always say when somebody says that, wherever I am, when somebody tells me that I physically move away from them, two or three feet, and I'll say, "In case God strikes you."

Dr. James Dobson: I don't want it to hit me.

Jerry Jenkins: Exactly. And people know all this stuff. Sometimes it seems like we're telling them things they already know, but they just need to be reminded and you say, "How much do you care about your marriage? Maybe you've gone several months where you wonder why you ever got married, and it's not as much fun as you thought it was going to be, and it's boring. And is this it? How about you being the one who commits yourself to starting over and saying, 'I'm going to woo my wife. I'm going to court her. I'm going to date her. And even if she doesn't respond at first, I'm going to do my part. I'm not doing it for her reaction. I'm doing it because it's the right thing.'" And then it will be reciprocated. I've heard people say that a marriage is an investment, you're going to get out of it what you put into it. If you invest time and everything in your wife, you're going to get that back.

Dr. James Dobson: Jerry, say it one more time in case there's someone out there that doesn't believe it or hasn't really understood it. When you said that passion that seems all consuming today will pass, it will not last. It never lasts. It doesn't even last in marriage. Marriage becomes a rock-solid relationship built on friendship and love for the Lord and commitment and many other things, but that breathless kind of excitement and enthusiasm is temporary, because emotions are unstable, they swing back and forth.

Jerry Jenkins: And especially it won't last if you don't fuel it and feed it. If you decide that it's a scary thing and if it lasts too long, it'll turn your eyes from your own spouse. That's when you nip it and it'll fade fast. What you don't want is to fuel it long enough for it to really cause a problem in your marriage.

Dr. James Dobson: Someone said, "The grass is greener on the other side of the fence, but it still has to be mowed." And sooner or later you got to come back to reality after you've had your fling.

Jerry Jenkins: That's the thing that always amazes me about people who leave a marriage because of an adulterous relationship and marry that other person. How do they ever trust each other? I don't understand that. It's like, "Now we've really, this is true love. Before we made a mistake, now we found this love greater than

the cosmos," and yet you're marrying somebody who was unfaithful to their spouse. I don't understand it.

Dr. James Dobson: But they do it. And I've seen miraculous healings of relationships, where one has just abused the other one in this way. And God can do a miracle, but it does take some healing. And in the last chapter of *Love Must Be Tough*, I talked about the fact that you've struggled through the virtual death of the marriage and when the other person eventually wakes up and comes back and apologizes and repents before God, you often lose the marriage because the one that was abused in the first place doesn't want it anymore. So, it is really tough to heal those wounds, but it can't be done.

Jerry Jenkins: Those are the miraculous stories and they're wonderful to hear, but, boy, they're rare. And people who think they're going to do this for a season and then come back, they could be sorely disappointed. I think you can always plant hedges. I've talked to couples where they've had sex before marriage and then they feel bad about that and repent of that and then decide they're going to remain pure until marriage. Some people say, "Well, what's the difference now? You're not virgins anymore. What's the difference?" The difference is you call it what it is. You were wrong, it was sin and you need to fix that before God and then you honor each other by remaining pure until you're married.

Dr. James Dobson: You mentioned in your book that Christianity Today did a survey some years ago and found that 23% of Christian men had engaged in inappropriate sexual relationships. That explains why this book is so important.

Jerry Jenkins: What makes it worse is those were pastors, 23% of pastors, and the figure for the lay person is about the same. It is, it's just shocking when you think about it. Sort of the bad news and good news about hedges now is that it's more needed today than it was 12, 13, 15 years ago.

Dr. James Dobson: Largely because of electronics and the internet and pornography. Let's get into that a little bit. We touched on it last time, but the internet is just all pervasive. You can hardly avoid it. Kids stumble onto it. How does a man who is very, very visual, and most of us are, avoid that?

Jerry Jenkins: I think it's important when you're in a good frame of mind and when you want to protect yourself, that's the time to confess to your spouse that this can be a problem for you. It's so easy to find pornography on the internet and of course a lot of these sites want credit card numbers and stuff. So, men will say, "Well, I'll never use my credit card online. I would never want anybody to find out I'm doing that." There's enough free stuff on there, you don't need to do that. So, there are little things and they sound kind of silly at first, but one thing I would never do is allow a teenage boy to have a computer in his own room where he can shut the door and watch what he wants. I would put family computers out in a central area where everybody can see the screen when you're seeing it. If they happen by, you don't have to close out of things.

For a man, I think it's important to put these, even, parental guards on your own machine. I know people who are accountable to their wives about their internet use. There are programs that will actually record where you've been and can print it out for somebody else, send it to their computer and say what sites you've been at. Men are involved in accountability groups where they just share these concerns. But I think mostly it's having that computer out where everybody can see it. If you can hide behind a closed door, you can be in deep trouble.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. You mentioned checking into a hotel. Do you typically tell the people at the front desk to block any pornography on your television set?

Jerry Jenkins: A lot of the hotels now have that choice on the TV as well. It'll have adult channels and it'll have a certain number where it'll block adult channels. If they have that, that's the first thing I do, before I even hang up my clothes and unpack the suitcase. Get on that television, block out those. If they don't have it, then I tell the desk. In fact, I've had people at the desk say, "So, I didn't realize there were kids with you." I say, "There's just one big kid, right here. Deal with me."

There are all kinds of things on television, even on cable and satellite, there are things that you can get for very little money and it's stuff that you could never see in your home before. I've talked to Christian men who have given me ideas for new hedges since the first book came out. One puts a little sign over his television, a little card, and it says, "I will set no unclean thing before my eyes." So, if he's going to watch it, he's going to be also looking at that verse saying, "Well, I'm violating that as I speak." So, whatever hedge you need, I say, plant it.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, let's review and tell us what those hedges are. There's six of them at one place in your book, but you now say there are nine there. I only saw six, but let's go through them.

Jerry Jenkins: The first one, for me, I call it, Two's Company and Three's Security. And that's that idea of not traveling or meeting or dining with a woman who's not related to me. I always make sure another person is there or I don't do it. And sometimes situations come up where that can't be avoided. I remember a time when I was to go on a business trip with a female employee of mine. She was going to bring an assistant and at the last minute the assistant got sick and couldn't come. We had the plane tickets, we had the reservations. I called my wife, I said, "Here's the situation. If you want me not to go, I won't go. My plan would be we go, we're in separate places and that type of thing." And so, there are occasions when you make exceptions and you just tell everybody and it's all fine and good. And then should somebody talk to Diana and say, "I saw your husband with so-and-so," she'd be insulted to think that they would think she didn't know that already. The next one-

Dr. James Dobson: What you're saying is, you don't want to be legalistic about it, you want to be reasonable.

Jerry Jenkins: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: Paul called it a reasonable service.

Jerry Jenkins: And there are times when, if you're going to speak somewhere and somebody to pick you up and the only person is a person of the opposite sex, again, I think generally you might have a policy against that, but there are occasions when you're going to have to make exceptions, but it's the spirit of it. It's making sure that you're protecting yourself at all times.

Dr. James Dobson: Billy Graham and his team have done this throughout his entire ministry.

Jerry Jenkins: That's right. Decades.

Dr. James Dobson: I believe they called it the Modesto Manifesto. Isn't that what it was?

Jerry Jenkins: I think that's right.

Dr. James Dobson: Where he had this list of things that he would not do to put himself in temptation.

Jerry Jenkins: You may recall I was privileged to work with him on his memoirs some years ago, and we were at a hotel-

Dr. James Dobson: Yes, Just As I Am, wasn't it?

Jerry Jenkins: Yeah. Yeah. We were at a hotel in Fort Lauderdale one time and his secretary actually sets up an office in her hotel room with fax machine and phones and that type of thing, and he's a couple floors away. He was never in that office and she was never in his room, it's just the way it was. If he would talk to her, it was by phone or if they met, it was with somebody else there. And here he was, at that time, in his 70s and still maintaining the policy, because he didn't want to give anybody anything to talk about.

The second one, I call, Touchy, Touchy. It's about being careful of how you touch and embrace and how long you do it and what your thought life is like when you're doing it and thinking of the other person, what they're going through at the time. And then, Some Compliments Don't Pay. It's how you say things to people, what you compliment them on. Are you talking about the person herself or just her clothes or how she looks? I can recall, we were in a situation where a woman in our church, her husband was unfaithful to her and one of his excuses was that she was really a shrew behind closed doors, and if people really knew her, they'd know why he had to stray. And we knew her to be a wonderful person. And so I said to Diana, "She needs to hear from a man that she's an exciting person and an attractive person." And I said, "I want to tell her that, but I want to tell her that with you there." So, I'm not saying this to her on the side and talk about a needy woman.

But that was sort of a fun conversation. She was very fragile. And I said, "Now, you haven't let him convince you that you're not attractive, have you?" And she didn't know what to say, because he had convinced her that. "Or that you're this way or that way?" And so, I gave her those compliments with my wife standing right there. But some compliments don't pay, things you say with your spouse not there, you have to be really careful of.

And then, Looking Down the Barrel of a Loaded Gun, that's talking about flirting and using suggestive comment, even in jest. I think it's just something to avoid unless you're flirting with your own wife. And then Memories, reminding your spouse that you know your wedding vows and being able to repeat them. And then my last one is, or my sixth one is, the Quality Time Versus Quantity Time. And it seems to have to do with raising kids more than it does a marriage, but as you well know, if a father is involved with raising the kids, that's really good for the marriage. The kids love seeing the parents interact. And this old myth, that is really from the pit, that if you don't have much time to spend with your kids, make sure the time you do spend with them is quality time.

Dr. James Dobson: Baloney.

Jerry Jenkins: Oh, man-

Dr. James Dobson: Just doesn't work that way.

Jerry Jenkins: To kids, quality time is quantity time, and it doesn't have to be anything deep or meaningful. It's just time, showing them that they're the priority. And I set a policy like that, Diana and I set a policy, that I wouldn't do any writing or work from the office from the time I got home from work until the time the kids went to bed. And it gave me hours a day with our kids and really paid off and also gave us time together and have them see us interact. And then, Everybody Loves a Love Story, that's telling your own love story and especially the funny parts, the embarrassing parts. Kids love that.

When I talked about new hedges, I didn't formalize them, but they are in the book, things that people have told me. One friend of mine said that he'll find himself sometimes on an airplane next to an attractive woman, and she might, by body language or just by tone of voice, sound like she's interested and they're away from home and who knows who's back home waiting for them and they could go out and have a meal or see each other. And he said the first thing he does is pull his wallet out of his pocket-

Dr. James Dobson: And show the pictures.

Jerry Jenkins: ... and show the pictures of the kids, and he says he can almost hear his kids coming off those pictures saying, "Thanks Dad for honoring Mom." And also, the sign on the TV, that's another hedge, "I will set no unclean thing before my eyes." And then, the computer, putting it out where everybody can see it,

putting the parental guards on there to keep you from going to sites like that. So, every time somebody reads this book, they come up with more hedges that I could add, but your hedges will be your hedges and mine will be mine.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, for a married man, a wedding ring is a hedge.

Jerry Jenkins: You bet, yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: It's a way of saying, "I'm married, I'm spoken for. And I'm faithful."

Jerry Jenkins: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, Jerry, thanks for writing this book, *Hedges: Loving Your Marriage Enough to Protect It*. I love the subtitle there, because that's really what it's all about. It's an act of love to restrict some of your activity and behavior and manner and speech in order to express your love for your wife.

Jerry Jenkins: I think that's a great point, and it's appropriate that we put it right here at the end, that these really, my hedges are a gift of love to my wife.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, in a manner of speaking, this book is your gift of love to marriages, and I think it's very, very valuable. I love the original edition. I was sorry when it went out of print and here we are all these years later and you have expanded it. I recommend it strongly. Jerry, it's always good to see you. You're doing great work. You've had a tremendous influence on the Christian community and those outside of it. Your Left Behind series reached many people who don't know the Lord. I appreciate the ordination that's on your life and that you have kept your life clean.

Jerry Jenkins: I appreciate it.

Dr. James Dobson: And thanks for being with us.

Jerry Jenkins: Thanks for having me.

Roger Marsh: It is essential to be sure that the defense of your marriage comes from a place of love for your spouse. Friend, if you missed any part of the special two-part conversation here on Family Talk featuring Dr. Dobson's conversation with author Jerry B. Jenkins about building hedges around your marriage, just visit drjamesdobson.org/familytalk and you can listen to the program again in its entirety. While you're there, you can also learn more about Jerry Jenkins and his many books and his ministry as well. Again, our website is drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

Well, over the past couple of programs we hope you have been encouraged to want to strengthen your marriage from what you've heard here on the broadcast. Here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute we know that as a

couple grows closer to the Lord, they will also grow closer together as well. That's why you are encouraged to sign up for a special ten-day marriage series. From the day you sign up and for the next 10 consecutive days, you'll receive an encouraging email from Dr. James Dobson about how to strengthen your marriage. That email will include some words of wisdom from Dr. Dobson, and also some questions for you and your spouse to answer, as well as a prayer to say together as well.

Now, to take the challenge, all you have to do is go online to drjamesdobson.org/10daymarriageseries, it's absolutely free. And remember, every marriage requires intention, dedication, and hard work to realize the gifts God intended for marriage. So, sprinkle in some love and trust and grace and you have a pretty nice recipe. Again, to sign up for our free ten-day marriage series challenge, just go to drjamesdobson.org/10daymarriageseries. Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and I pray that you have a peaceful and blessed weekend. Be sure to join us again Monday, right here, for another edition of Family Talk.

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

Dr. James Dobson: Well, thank you everyone for tuning into our program today. You may know that Family Talk is a listener-supported program and we remain on the air by your generosity, literally. If you can help us financially, we would certainly appreciate it. God's blessings to you all.