



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Defeating Dementia – Part 1

**Guest(s):** Dr. Richard Furman

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**Dr. James Dobson:** Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk: a listener supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson, Family Institute.

**Roger Marsh:** Greetings, and welcome to Family Talk. Occasionally here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we want to use our time together on the broadcast to tackle some of the more difficult and painful topics that families face. On today's program, we're going to talk about the neurodegenerative disease known as Alzheimer's, and how the children and spouses of people who have this form of dementia can find hope. I'm Roger Marsh, and you're listening to family talk with your host author and psychologist, Dr. James Dobson. With Dr. Dobson in the studio to discuss this difficult subject is his longtime friend, Dr. Richard Furman.

Dr. Richard Furman has over 30 years of experience as a vascular surgeon. He has served as president of the North Carolina chapter of the American College of Surgeons, also as president of the North Carolina Surgical Society, and as a two-term governor of the American College of Surgeons. He also co-founded World Medical Mission, which is the medical arm of Samaritan's Purse. Dr. Furman has traveled around the globe with World Medical Mission, providing care and treatment to vulnerable and underserved people groups all in the name of Christ. As you'll hear during today's program, which was originally recorded back in 2018, Dr. Furman has a special place in his heart for the topic of Alzheimer's. His wife's mother passed away from this debilitating disease and that experience prompted him to write his book called *Defeating Dementia*. In fact, that is the title and topic of our broadcast today. So let's join Dr. Dobson and Dr. Furman right now.

**Dr. James Dobson:** Today we're going to talk about a very difficult subject that many families are dealing with today, and that is the debilitating diagnosis of Alzheimer's. We were talking in here in the studio just a few minutes ago and agreed that, from our perspective, this may be the cruelest disease of all. Did you know that according to the Alzheimer's Association, 5.7 million Americans are living with it, and projections are, listen to this now, the projections are that that number will rise to 14 million by the year 2050. And an even more sobering statistic is that half of all Americans who are now 85 or older are afflicted by this horrible

disease. Half, half of the Americans, half of us who have reached that age, I haven't, but I know a lot of people who have and who are suffering with it.

I said this is one of the most cruel of all illnesses. Let me tell you why. It robs patients of their memories of childhood, and courtship, and parents, and awareness of grandchildren and friends. It strips them of fellowship with God and a reflection on life. Every good thing is taken away, especially the marital relationship. Dating and the fun type things and the humor and the vacations, everything you've experienced is gone. Only one party remembers them. It is devastating for victims and families alike. Those closest to those afflicted often suffer their own private Hell. I don't use that word often, this comes close to it. And there is no cure for it, but there may be an avenue to prevention, and that's what we're going to talk about today.

This is what makes this program so important. I said, also before we went on the air, that this may be one of the most important topics that we have dealt with in many years. It's relevant even to the young, it's relevant to everybody, but even including the millennials who are sometimes accused of being self-absorbed, many of their grandparents are going through it, and some of their parents will walk this path. And I don't know how to tell you guys this, but you will be there soon yourself. Take it from me. Life passes awfully quickly. So it's relevant to you too. In fact, you may be in the best position to prevent it. And we'll talk more about that.

The book that we're going to be discussing today is a must read by all of us. It's titled *Defeating Dementia*. It's written by my guest and wonderful friend, Dr. Richard Furman, a cardiologist and surgeon. Been in practice for 30 years. He has been the surgeon and the physician for Franklin Graham and Billy Graham before he died, and of course the Samaritans Purse folks. I wish I could take the time to tell you all of things that he's done. Dick, welcome back to Family Talk. It's so good to have you here.

Dr. Richard Furman: Well, it's great to be here again, Dr. Dobson. Good to be here.

Dr. James Dobson: We've discussed several of your books in previous programs and I've appreciated them all, but this one is unique. Do you feel that way about it? This one's kind of set aside.

Dr. Richard Furman: It's the most exciting one I've ever written and I think the most informative and the one that everybody ought to know about, *Defeating Dementia*.

Dr. James Dobson: Did I overstate the case of what Alzheimer's is like?

Dr. Richard Furman: No. It's known to be the most dreaded disease in America. People dread that more than cancer. I mean just...studies show that if you ask that question. It's terrible. And to watch your mother-in-law and Mrs. Dale, as I put in the book, to

watch her go through 15 years of the progressive stages of Alzheimer's, it's terrible. It's hard to believe.

Dr. James Dobson: I mentioned also before we went on the air that I have a very good friend, also a physician, whose wife has been dying of Alzheimer's, experiencing it. And now she is dying 11 years they've gone through this. I've followed it closely. It's a tender spot that you just... I don't know how people deal with it. I really don't. You wrote about your mother-in-law in your book. I've got a paragraph from that book. Would you read it for us?

Dr. Richard Furman: It says, what drove you to write this book? Well, I watched my mother-in-law progress through the three stages of Alzheimer's. I watched her go from being an active, middle-aged lady to beginning to forget little things like her car keys and not remembering where she was driving to, and calling someone one on the phone and not remembering who she was calling when they answered. I saw her lose everyday independence the day I got her doctor to write a prescription, which we placed on the refrigerator stating no driving. Then came the walker, the wheelchair, and finally, being bedridden and completely dependent on caregivers.

Dr. James Dobson: So, you've watched this, not only as a physician and as one taking care of patients medically, but inside your family.

Dr. Richard Furman: Right. And that's what really got me, is to watch her go through these different stages of Alzheimer's. And I'm a physician. I always thought it was the genes, but I would just wonder what's going on in her brain?

Dr. James Dobson: Until recently medical science thought it was primarily genetic, right?

Dr. Richard Furman: Right. The genes was a big, we thought was a big part of it. But to tell you the truth, and I started reading and studying the medical literature to see, or what part really does genes have to play with it. And it was remarkable for me as a doctor to realize it's not nearly as significant as I thought, only 5% of Alzheimer's is due to the Alzheimer's gene, that guarantees you're going to have Alzheimer's if you have that gene, but there's another gene APOE4, which 10 to 20% of Americans have, which makes you more prone to have Alzheimer's. But it doesn't mean you're going to have Alzheimer's. Nor does it mean you're not going have Alzheimer's unless you do something about it. Things that you have control over three lifestyles that you can do.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, that's kind of encouraging, isn't it?

Dr. Richard Furman: Very encouraging. I was shocked.

Dr. James Dobson: So, each of us is on the hook for our own health, really at that stage.

Dr. Richard Furman: That's right. And what...that's exactly what I want the reader of this book to realize is that, the road your own determines your destination.

Dr. James Dobson: But before you tell us that, give us the evidence for it. The Journal of the American Medical Association's, one of the most prestigious journals in medicine around the world really. I published an article in it is one of my crowning achievements. When I was at Children's Hospital, they did a study of 1800 patients over a period of 11...

Dr. Richard Furman: 14 Years.

Dr. James Dobson: 14 years. And what did they, I mean, this is hard research.

Dr. Richard Furman: It followed these people for 14 years and they found that the ones who ate properly versus the ones who ate the bad food. And I wasn't real sure exactly what the bad food was or the good food was, the ones that ate the bad diet were 40% more likely to develop Alzheimer's. Well, that was shocking.

Dr. James Dobson: That's pretty dramatic.

Dr. Richard Furman: What was even more dramatic was they had this group of people and there was a group of them that exercised. And there was a group that didn't exercise. They saw the ones that didn't exercise versus the ones that exercised. The ones that exercised had a 48% less likelihood of developing Alzheimer's. Then there was another group that did both they ate properly and exercised properly, and they had a 67% less likelihood.

Dr. James Dobson: I hope everybody got that because you threw statistics to people who, some of them are driving cars on their way to work and thinking about many things, go back and think about that. If I walked up to you and you are aware of Alzheimer's or other dementia causes, and I said to you know, without a great deal of effort, you can lower your risk 67% just by doing these three things. Man alive! I think I could sell that.

Dr. Richard Furman: That only covered the food and the exercise. And I got to think about what about the third lifestyle, the weight. This was what was shocking. If you are overweight, you've doubled your odds of getting Alzheimer's. If you're obese, you've tripled your chances of getting Alzheimer's. So I'm thinking, hey, this is something that everybody ought to know. Those three different lifestyles can change your future.

Dr. James Dobson: Give them to us again.

Dr. Richard Furman: All right. The food that you eat was the 40%. The exercise with 48%, the combination was, was the 67%, but the weight, and this is, this is important. The weight, if you're overweight, you're twice as likely, it doubles your odds of developing Alzheimer's. If you're obese, it triples your odds. And there's a lot to

being with overweight that goes with the health of your arteries. The more you read about these, these three lifestyles, they all zero in on the health of your arteries. And we can get into that a little later.

Dr. James Dobson: In fact, that's what your book is really about. It's about the health of the arteries.

Dr. Richard Furman: Well, you can't do a study. The literature about Alzheimer's that it doesn't come back to the health of your heart. I'd say at least a third of the articles written in the literature will talk about that. The health of your heart is similar to the health of your brain, so that's the bottom line of it all there's things we can be doing that protects the blood flow. You got to have the nutrients going into the brain, the oxygen and the nutrients, but it also has to clear out the bad part, the debris of the brain. It's got to carry that off. That blood flow is the one most significant part of defeating Alzheimer's.

Dr. James Dobson: We're going to talk about each of those three, because it's really important to understand what's going on. The title of this book is really magnificent, *Defeating Dementia*. Can you really make that statement? Can you really say to America and the world, you probably don't have to go this route.

Dr. Richard Furman: Exactly. And that's what I was going to say a minute ago about going down this road. Everybody listen to us today. Everybody that reads the book, they're being presented a fork in the road, they're going to decide, they're going to continue on like they are, or they're going to change. They're going to commit to a change. And that change...the book goes through all of the different steps of what we can be doing percentage wise to defeat dementia.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, 28 years ago, I was 54 years of age and I was playing basketball and I played three times a week and I absolutely loved it. It was the most fun part of my week. And I went up for a lay-in and shot the ball clear over the basket. And I knew something was drastically wrong. And I had chest pain and I had a heart attack, 28 years ago. That probably saved, well, it did, it threatened my life, I could have died right there, but it saved my life because I made some changes very quickly. And I kept them. One of them was exercise. This is my 24th year of exercising in almost every day.

The second is I changed my way of eating. And I mean, it was radical. I mean, you spend 10 days in a cardiac care unit, not knowing if you're going to live, it gets your attention. And I lay there and I said, Lord, if you give me another chance, I won't mess it up. And a lot of people change their diets for a little bit. For a short time, it's so hard. The whole culture takes you in the other direction, your family, all of the events. I just had a birthday and there was stuff presented to me there that I haven't eaten in a while. But then the third one was the hardest for me and that's weight. It just, you would think exercising that amount would keep the weight out off, but you still have got to exercise a lot of discipline. Don't you?

Dr. Richard Furman: It's all intertwined, all the three. And didn't your father have heart attack?

Dr. James Dobson: My listen, my dad had four brothers, all five of them died of coronary artery disease. And my grandmother had a stroke. My grandfather had a heart attack, seven of them. And on the paternal side, died of heart attacks or strokes. And here I am healthy, seemingly.

Dr. Richard Furman: When the first time you ever told me that Dr. Dobson, it just ran through my mind. And I think I told you then your exercise and, we'll get into cholesterol later, but your exercise increased your hero, HDL cholesterol, which cleans out those arteries. That exercising that every day for those five years, that has saved your life. That's why you're sitting here today. Or you wouldn't be here, but you made that commitment to exercise and that's there. There's so much to exercise that's so significant, not only with your heart, but with Alzheimer's. And if you think about it...

Dr. James Dobson: I had no idea that I was affecting my brain.

Dr. Richard Furman: Anytime you affect your heart, you're affecting your brain with more blood flow to your brain. But exercise, you think about it, it does. It increases that HDL just flashing light there, that exercise increases your good HDL, which clean out your arteries. There's nothing, there's no medicine. There's not a pill you can take to increase your HDL. Exercise is the main thing. Also, exercise increase the strength of your heart. It's like lifting weights to get your biceps thicker that someone exercise their hearts much thicker. That it's stronger. So it's more efficient. So what you did is not only did you clean out your arteries, but you increase the strength of your heart. There's no medicine that will increase the strength of your heart. And I get that across to people who don't exercise. There was a study where they studied people who exercise the most and the least. The ones that exercise that when the top 10% versus the ones who are in the bottom 10%, the bottom 10% were twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's. And they had followed them along with these, with pet scans.

Dr. James Dobson: That's scary, you know that?

Dr. Richard Furman: Well, just let that sink in. They followed it along. And there's the ones that didn't exercise. They had this beta amyloid building up in the brain. They could see it, a picture of it, double the odds now. And I used to think, well, I see people walking around the track and I'm thinking, they're not really exercising, but more and more you read these articles, even walking is considered great exercise with Alzheimer's. And the study that I like showed that if you can't walk one lap or a quarter of a mile, versus someone who walks two miles a day, and this was four to five days a week in this article, they were double the chance of getting Alzheimer's. The ones that didn't walk versus the ones that walked the two miles.

So even walking is a great exercise in preventing Alzheimer. I kept wondering why that doesn't put that much strain on the heart. How does that work? Realize it enhances the other lifestyles. It enhances it...convincing yourself, convinces your mind that if you exercise, okay, I'm going to, I'm going to eat differently. I'm going to lose some weight. It convinces...it enhances these other lifestyles that they're all intertwined. So even if you're just walking that...today, I'd say the one most important takeaway from this program, get yourself a goal to exercise five to six days a week, starting today, even if it's just walking.

- Dr. James Dobson: And it also affects other organs of the body, doesn't it?
- Dr. Richard Furman: Oh, sure.
- Dr. James Dobson: Those same disciplines if you will, affect diabetes and cancer and any number of things, it's general health!
- Dr. Richard Furman: Weight loss, you think of colon cancer, you think of breast cancer. That's just the exercises related to your weight, your weights related to especially those two cancers. So it does, it affects a lot more of your body than we have time to discuss today.
- Dr. James Dobson: As a matter of fact, our time is gone, but boy, we're not through talking about this. I want to talk about those three disciplines next time. You've flown out here to be with us from you came a long way. So we're going to just continue talking right now and then we'll let people hear tomorrow what we're saying today. But Dick, I appreciate you so much. You've become a great friend to me and well...
- Dr. Richard Furman: That's mutual.
- Dr. James Dobson: We both love the same Lord. Don't we?
- Dr. Richard Furman: Yeah, that's right. I'd forgotten. You'd had that heart attack long ago and it just dawned on me whenever you told me a few weeks ago about it. That's what saved your life.
- Dr. James Dobson: You, you said you've never seen anything quite like that.
- Dr. Richard Furman: No. That, that you had what? Three arteries blocked.
- Dr. James Dobson: And the main artery, the L.A.D, the Widowmaker...
- Dr. Richard Furman: That's the Widowmaker.
- Dr. James Dobson: ...was totally blocked. And the left and right circumflex were also 30 and 40% blocked.

Dr. Richard Furman: Well, that...deciding to exercise is why you're here. I mean, the other things too, but that's the one most significant factor you picked up on, and that's why I want to get the readers to realize don't wait on something like that. Just read the book and let that be the inspiration to do it.

Dr. James Dobson: And the book is *Defeating Dementia: What You Can Do to Prevent Alzheimer's*. I...wouldn't you like to have a book that said what you can do to prevent cancer? Well, you probably lower the risk, but it's out there and people get a surprise with cancer, but here you're making a definitive statement, what you can do to prevent Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. You know, that's a good news story, isn't it?

Dr. Richard Furman: It's great news. It, it was surprising to me as a physician, but it's something that I realized, Hey, there are things we can be doing.

Dr. James Dobson: And Dr. Furman, next time of all the things that I want to cover in that period of time, and there's a lot, I'm most interested in how you can detect Alzheimer's. There is a way to know that you got work to do, and we'll tell people how next time.

Dr. Richard Furman: Okay.

Roger Marsh: You've been listening to Family Talk with your host psychologist and bestselling author, Dr. James Dobson. On today's program, we featured the first half of an enlightening conversation that Dr. Dobson had with Dr. Richard Furman back in 2018, about some simple ways to lower your risk of developing Alzheimer's. If you want to learn more about Dr. Furman, his book, called *Defeating Dementia*, and his ministry through the World Medical Mission, visit [drjamesdobson.org/broadcast](http://drjamesdobson.org/broadcast). That's [drjamesdobson.org/broadcast](http://drjamesdobson.org/broadcast).

And if you're going through a hard time right now, whether you're suffering from a physical ailment, a relationship issue, or even a spiritual struggle, we want to pray for you. Give us a call with your request at (877) 732-6825. A member of our staff will be happy to pray with you 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to offer you encouragement. That number once again is (877) 732-6825. Well, tomorrow on Family Talk, Dr. Richard Furman will once again, join Dr. Dobson to discuss some specific ways that you can lower your risk of developing dementia. You won't want to miss that conversation. That's coming up next time right here on 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. You know, the news comes in all different 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



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