



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: A Journey of Widowhood and Grief - Part 2

Guest(s): Joyce Rogers

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Dr. James 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: Greetings and welcome to Family Talk, the listener supported broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and today you're going to hear the conclusion of a conversation Dr. Dobson had with Joyce Rogers, wife of the late pastor, Adrian Rogers. It was in 2005 that Adrian Rogers died from complications from cancer treatments. He was 74 years of age when he passed away and Joyce found herself grieving her sweetheart after 54 years of marriage. Today, Joyce Rogers will continue to share with Dr. Dobson about her journey of widowhood. She'll offer some practical advice for widows who are trying to cope, as well as some thoughtful ideas for people who are looking to comfort or encourage a widow in their lives.

Joyce Rogers is the author of numerous books, including *Therefore, I Hope in Him*, and *Grace for the Widow*. Joyce and Adrian have five grown children, several grandchildren, and many great grandchildren as well. Now, when this conversation was recorded, we did have a studio audience present, so you might hear some of their noises and voices in the background. Let's listen in now, to the conclusion of Dr. Dobson's classic conversation with Joyce Rogers, here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Joyce, you are the mother of five children, Steve, Gayle, Philip, David and Janice. And you lost baby Phillip in a crib death...

Joyce Rogers: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: At two and a half months of age.

Joyce Rogers: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: That had to be terribly difficult.

Joyce Rogers: It was very interesting that we had just been at a new church at Fort Pierce, Florida, Parkview Baptist Church just several weeks, and it was on Mother's Day.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, my goodness.

Joyce Rogers: And we had just gotten through eating lunch in the... My two oldest children at the time, Steve was four, Gayle was two and a half and little Philip was two and a half months. And I was getting ready to just go take a nap. The other children were asleep. And as mothers all do, I was just going to go by and look in the crib, and he looked so strange. And I remember calling for Adrian to come quickly. And I remember asking him, "Is he dead?" And Adrian picked his body up, tucked him in his coat. He still had his coat on from Sunday. And he said, "You stay here," because the other children were in the other room, and he drove as fast as he could to the hospital.

And I will never forget while I was gone. It seemed like an eternity, and yet it seemed like just a few minutes, but also a testimony for the word of God. To hide the word of God in your heart as a little child, as an older child, as an adult or wherever you are, because I can still visualize myself standing in the living room, crying out to God, the 23rd Psalm.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, is there a linkage between the loss of Baby Philip and the loss of your husband, Dr. Adrian Rogers?

Joyce Rogers: Let me tell you a little experience there, because actually when little Philip died, there was very little teaching at our denomination at that time about the Spirit-Filled Life. And really, we discovered through the circumstances of the greatest need we ever had in our lives, the secret of living the Spirit-Filled Life. I was born again when I was nine and I was a student of scripture memory and so forth. I knew the verses about praising God at all times, even when you're going through hard times. And I tried my best to praise the Lord. And I remember feeling like such a hypocrite because I didn't feel like praising God. I would just try over and over again to...

Dr. James Dobson: You're a mom who had just lost a baby.

Joyce Rogers: Right. So I can remember that one day as I... Somebody gave me this wonderful... It's a poem in a way, but it was a piece... It's really God speaking, it was called "Lean Hard." And I wrote another book called *Lean Hard on Jesus*, and it was based on that concept. And during those days I learned what I have called a concept later on the Lord... The Lord explains things to you later of how to lean hard on Jesus and dig deep into His marvelous word, His written word. And I still remember one day having discovered a passage of scripture that became my life's verses in Psalm 63:3-4 that says, "Because Thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee, thus will I bless Thee while I live, I will lift up my hands in Thy name."

It so spoke to my heart and God just spoke to me and said, "I didn't ask you to feel like it. I just asked you to be obedient." The second verse went on to say, "I will lift up my hands in thy name." But I can remember in the privacy of my

bedroom, lifting my hands to God and saying, "God, I claim this as my very own, that regardless how I feel that I will praise your name." And God began to work that out in my life. And I feel like I chose by faith that I was going to allow His loving kindness to flood my life. And then another little thing... I don't know exactly when it was, but so many people sent wonderful cards and so forth. And some people, they sent me... And I'm sure you've seen this, a list of how you could feel things you could feel when you lose a loved one. And one of them was, you could get angry with God.

And I had another occasion where I... This is only the second time I did this, and only two times I laid my hand on that list. And I said, "God, I am not going to do this. If you'll help me, I by faith choose to not get angry with God." But I feel like... In fact, I heard somebody just give a testimony the other day, how they were angry with God, and then they got over it. Why don't you do it at the front end? Why have to climb over all these things to get to God? I needed him too badly. And somehow those things connected there, as I claimed by faith that God would be real to me and God's word is such a part of that as I claim promises from His word.

Dr. James Dobson: I wish that every Christian knew that God does not judge you on the basis of your emotions and feelings.

Joyce Rogers: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: You can't help what you feel.

Joyce Rogers: Right. And if you do get angry, then bring that anger to God and start from there. Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: That's right.

Joyce Rogers: Because some do.

Dr. James Dobson: But the Lord loves you. He made you, He knows your emotions. And your faith and your commitment supersede those feelings. You agree with that?

Joyce Rogers: Right. And really, I think we have to consciously bring these things to the Lord and be honest with Him and bring them to God and trust Him.

Dr. James Dobson: Joyce, you are in my mind, a quintessential Titus 2 Woman. You have the skills that come from having lived this long in life and have seen grief and sorrow and happiness. If I were a young woman and I came to you and said, "Mrs. Rogers, can you help me? I've lost my husband, I'm a young widow and I can't get a handle on this. This is destroying me." What would you say? You've written a lot of that in your book, probably your first advice is, "Read the book."

Joyce Rogers: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: But, what advice would you give?

Joyce Rogers: And I tell you... And widows come in all ages, and there are challenges at every age, and there are more challenges with children still in the home. And of course my children were grown. Somehow, I just... It's like, live one day at a time and take the next step and do the next thing. That's one of the things that I said in my book. That's not really original with me, I think that probably years ago when I was a young mother, Elisabeth Elliot was one of the greatest challenges in my life. I couldn't believe that she took her five-year-old daughter into the tribes of the Ache Indians. And I still am grateful for her, but what a wonderful woman of God she was. And I think probably one of the things that she said was, "Just do the next thing."

And in my profound part... Of course is the foundation of the word of God, the living word of God, Jesus, and the written word, His Bible, you can't get along without it. But then the practical part of just working this out on your daily life. And one of my daughters, my oldest daughter was home a while back and she said, "Mother, aren't you lonely? Don't you need someone else?" And I said, "I think about your daddy every day and I miss him, but I'm not lonely." And if you haven't been where I am, and maybe every widow can't say that, because I think it is a choice and I didn't get there just not in my own strength. I consciously claim God's word. And I live alone, but I am not lonely and even though I think of him every day.

I don't go to the graveyard very much. Sometimes I go, because I think maybe I should on an anniversary or something, but there's pictures all around the house. I have memories of places where we've been, and I think about him all the time. He's still on the radio and television. I listen to him, but I feel like that he is not there at that grave. It's just his body. And I feel like that he's with the Lord in heaven and that he would...

Dr. James Dobson: And you're going to see him again.

Joyce Rogers: I'm going to see him again and that he would want me to be out using my life in the best way that I can. And I don't know how much longer that I have, or what God may want me to do tomorrow. I can't believe that I'm here. So I just want to encourage whatever widow, whether you're young or older, there are challenges at every age. And some... And He, God brings along someone else in your life. And I would just say about that... If you do, make sure that you heal first. Don't go run out thinking, "I'm lonely, I've got to have somebody else." I know people that God has brought along somebody wonderful, I'm so happy for them, but you make sure that Jesus is your spiritual husband before you go out to try to find somebody else, just to fill that void because only Jesus can really fill that void that's in your life.

Dr. James Dobson: The extension of that is not to make any great, big changes in your life while you're still in the grieving process.

Joyce Rogers:

But it was. And at first it's... When I look at the full moon, I still get a tear, because we always used to look at the full moon together and the memories that come back. But it does get easier but you have to claim it. The Bible says, "Weeping will endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning." But if you don't claim it... And I took another widow out for lunch a couple of weeks after her husband died. And she said to me, "A mutual friend said it will never get better." And I remember saying, "Elizabeth, that's not true." I said, "Because God's word says, if we claim His promises that it will get better and joy will come in the morning." And that doesn't mean that there is not a legitimate time of grieving, but I think as we claim His promises, that the time and claiming of God's promises, that joy will come in the morning. And yes, there are sometimes bittersweet memories.

But Valentine's Day was the hardest. I call it a bummer for widows and for other singles. And the first year... My youngest daughter was the only one in town at the time and she and her husband took me out for a special time. And then the next year, I think they did the same thing. And then the next year, I thought to myself, "Hey, it's time for me to do something else." Anyway, my friend's husband had died and I decided... I remember having this experience of going accidentally down the Valentine aisle in the drug store. And it was like you had taken a sword and just pierced it in my heart. But somehow that day I decided I was going into the Valentine aisle and buy a Valentine for my friend. So I took her to lunch and I took her a Valentine. And I conquered the Valentine aisle that day.

And every year, since then... It's been several years. I go into the Valentine aisle and I buy... Well, this year, I bought a dozen Valentines and sent them to friends. To some divorcees, but mainly widows. And then at the third year, I decided that it was time to do something else. And my youngest daughter, Janice helped me and my daughter-in-law, Kelly, and then a friend of theirs, Beth. And I invited, I think it was 14 widows, to my house for Valentine's Day. And we shared scripture. And afterwards we all came in the living room and I asked them... It was just something that came to me. And to me it wasn't any big thing. But I asked them to go around the circle and not to pray as sometimes we do, but to tell just a little memory about their husband. And you would've thought that I had done the most wonderful thing in the world. To give them an opportunity to tell one little, special story about their husband.

But at the end of that day, I was the one who was blessed. And I've done that almost every year since then. And nobody took me out for Valentine's Day this year. And I've gotten to where, as I reached out, that God has so ministered back to me. Sometimes you can't do it right at first, but that's a real part of healing and to thank the Lord. I will sit down and write all the things. That first Thanksgiving after Adrian died, I wrote a list of all the things I was grateful for that day. That's what I do every Thanksgiving, and I thought, "Why should I not do it today?"

And all the things that I'm grateful for and thankful for and I think so many things. And then of course the word of God is such a part in just the little things, the little practical things, just do the next thing. I realized... In fact, I never expected my first trip to the grocery store to be sad, but I realized when I got there, what am I going to buy today? I was unconscious. I just thought about Adrian, what I was going to buy to please him. It's like, what do I want? What do I... And it's a challenge to cook for one and to do those things. But I think it's a very daily thing to work it out daily, step-by-step and not to think, "What am I going to do if this happens to me?" Don't think about it. It may not happen to you.

Dr. James Dobson: We did a radio program about 1983, that comes back to me today. The guest was an author, she was a Chinese woman. I think her name was Chu. But she talked in her book about something she called, the attack. That after you've lost someone, you gradually get to the point that you're coping and you're doing fairly well. And you're just walking along... And she gave the illustration of a grocery store. And you're there, and all of a sudden something happens to bring it back. It was like your trip down the aisle with the Valentines cards being available.

Joyce Rogers: I went to the hardware store, which I didn't usually do without Adrian, and all of a sudden when I got in there, "Oh, he was here."

Dr. James Dobson: Do you understand the concept of the attack?

Joyce Rogers: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: And it all comes flooding in on you again. And you have to get it under control again.

Joyce Rogers: Right, you have to. And I think you have to consciously...

Dr. James Dobson: Because life will remind you of your loss.

Joyce Rogers: Right. And I think some part of it is the solution is to consciously then give it to God. And then some of it, you do sit down and cry sometimes. And I say, it's not wrong to do that.

Dr. James Dobson: And that's not all bad.

Joyce Rogers: Right, that's not all bad. But you can't keep on forever in that stage. I think there is a legitimate time of weeping and so forth, and it may be different for different people.

Dr. James Dobson: I had a widow tell me that her answer to it was to not stop. Keep going. And involve yourself in the church, involve yourself. When people invite you, go. Keep moving. If you sit down and just wallow in it...

Joyce Rogers: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: It will be too painful to endure.

Joyce Rogers: Right. But to me, you have to leave yourself a little time too. Not to just... You can't trust that busyness because it's got to be a balance. It's like the balance of God's word and so forth in your life and the practical things of giving of yourself. I have laid aside some of the things that I did like I taught for many, many years, and I'm not doing that. I'm speaking more now. And so it's similar, different type of a thing, but I still sing in my choir. And I don't know whether I'm the oldest one in the choir, but I will still keep singing while I've got a tune in my heart. But the benefits of praising God and singing praises to Him, I think it's a healing effect.

Dr. James Dobson: If the Lord had wanted me to do that, he'd have given me a better voice.

Joyce Rogers: In fact, I speak on this...

Dr. James Dobson: You haven't heard my voice.

Joyce Rogers: Listen, I... It doesn't make any difference. And I will tell my widows, it doesn't make any difference whether you sing or not. Just sing in your privacy and sing your solo to Jesus. He's longing and waiting to hear it.

Dr. James Dobson: Okay, solo. Solo.

Joyce Rogers: You don't have to. You sing to Jesus. In fact, one day it dawned on me, that Jesus wanted me to sing my love song to him. And it doesn't make any difference whether you have a good voice or not, he's longing to hear it. And I used to... Whenever I had a loved one die or whatever I would... And I would recommend this to everybody. I would read again, all the scriptures about heaven, and sing all the songs I knew about heaven. And heaven is a little sweeter now and I envision him there. My little baby, Philip was the first one in my family to go. But then my parents are there, Adrian's parents are there. I have many loved ones there.

Dr. James Dobson: And a great granddaughter.

Joyce Rogers: Right. And I think sometimes that Adrian's there with little Philip and little Poppy Joy. Something that I really have hardly spoken to, but my little baby Philip, was buried in Florida because that's where we were at the time in our hometown. Anyway, I asked the funeral director... Somehow it just came to me. I asked... Because we hardly ever went there anymore. "Could you bring my baby's body here?" And so his body was brought and is beside Adrian. And the only time I really liked to go there... I liked to go there on Easter and think about... Or the time just to read the scriptures about when at one time, when we're all going to be resurrected and whether I'm going to be here or not, and

just visualize that time when they're both going to be raised together, we're all going to meet the Lord in the air.

Otherwise, it's not too meaningful to me just to go and think that the body's there, but the thought that one day we're going to rise and the bodies will come back and be united with their risen body. And we'll all go to meet the Lord together in the air is a wonderful thing. And a lot of times songs about heaven, when we're singing them in church, I do think about him, more so.

Dr. James Dobson: What's your favorite hymn?

Joyce Rogers: About heaven. In fact, I recently sang it at a funeral. Bill Skelton died. He was the president of our ministry and I was asked to sing at his funeral and I sang Face to Face.

Dr. James Dobson: Would you sing one verse of it for us now?

Joyce Rogers: Okay now. I've had a little something in my voice...

Dr. James Dobson: That's all right.

Joyce Rogers: Face to face with Christ my Savior. Face to face, what will it be? When with rapture I behold Him, Jesus Christ who died for me? Face to face I shall behold Him, far beyond the starry sky. Face to face in all His glory, I shall see Him by and by.

And I just think how wonderful it was when Adrian saw Him face to face and how one day, we're going to behold the Savior, face to face. And that's the ultimate about what heaven really is going to be about. Indeed, God's word has been such a comfort to my heart and we can't get away with not spending that time with God. I love word studies, and I've done a word study on I will. We talked about I will. I've got a bunch of I wills, and help and hope and comfort and all kinds of things. And in my book, there is a whole section, a brief section on different verses about comfort and help, and a section that I gleaned from some of my favorite Old Testament names of God, that Adrian has a brief word about these and they were some of my favorite verses.

And I must close by saying about the verse that the name for God that I had thought the least about that has become one of my favorites, and that is Jehovah Sabaoth. A lot of people just think Sabaoth, that means the Sabbath. But that word means the Lord of host. And one of my favorite verses now to widows, it says in Isaiah 54:5, "Thy maker is thy husband; the Lord of hosts is His name. Thy Redeemer, the God of the whole earth shall He be called." And it dawned on me one day that my maker was my spiritual husband and that His special name for me as a widow was Jehovah Sabaoth, the Lord of hosts. And I have cried out many times, "Oh, Jehovah Sabaoth, fight this battle for me."

And I did a word study one time on the Lord of hosts. It's all through the Old Testament and some through the New Testament, that He has promised to be my spiritual husband and to fight my battles for me. Adrian would've died for me. I know he would have, but he's not here anymore. So, I know that Jesus, He's already died for me and rose again, and how wonderful His promises are. And I live by those promises.

Dr. James Dobson: Joyce, I said at the end of the last program, that you're a great lady. And I know it even more after talking to you again today. It's just amazing what the Lord is doing in your heart and through you. And because of you, other people will be blessed. The title of your book is *Grace for the Widow: A Journey Through the Fog of Loss*, by Joyce Rogers. Thanks for being with us.

Joyce Rogers: Thank you so much.

Dr. James Dobson: And we'll do it again.

Joyce Rogers: Thank you.

Roger Marsh: A moving conversation on the topic of widowhood between Dr. James Dobson and Joyce Rogers, the widow of pastor Adrian Rogers. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 say, "Praise be to the God and father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

Joyce Rogers has definitely received comfort from God throughout her grief, through His word, His presence and people that He has placed in her life. Joyce in turn has reached out to other widows to comfort them. And that's such a great picture of Jesus using His church to be His hands and His feet.

Now, to learn more about Joyce Rogers, her ministry, and her many books, including *Grace for the Widow: A Journey Through the Fog of Loss*, visit our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. While you're there, by the way, you can also request a CD copy of this two-part conversation. That web address again, drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. That's drjamesdobson.org/broadcast.

And of course, please don't hesitate to give us a call. We'd love to talk with you, to pray with you, possibly even recommend a resource that could be of benefit to you. Our number here at Family Talk is (877) 732-6825. That's (877) 732-6825. And finally, if you don't follow us on Facebook, why not? Let me encourage you to do just that. You'll join over 2 million followers who get notifications about new broadcasts and encouragement from like-minded Christians, just like you. So once you're on Facebook, just search for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

That's all the time we have for today. Thanks again for listening to Family Talk. From all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, have a blessed day and we'll see you again next time.

Announcer:

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