



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Mom Strong - Part 1

Guest(s): Heidi St. John

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Dr. Clinton: Hi everyone. This is Dr. Tim Clinton, executive director of the James Dobson Family Institute and president of the American Association of Christian Counselors. What unique and unprecedented times these are. The simplicity and hope of the Gospel seem a little sweeter, certainly a little more precious during these times of uncertainty. Our hope remains secure in Jesus Christ and that brings me comfort, great comfort.

Dr. Clinton: I wanted to take a moment to let you know that we here at the James Dobson Family Institute love you and we're praying for you. If you're struggling and need some encouragement, we'd be honored to pray with you. You can call us toll free at (877) 732-6825, that number again (877) 732-6825 or simply go to drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. Thanks for inviting us to be a part of your day. We're going to get through this challenging time together. Let's go now to today's presentation.

Heidi St. John: When mothers realize they can't do it without the help of the Lord, they're right where God wants them. And God does miracles in times of weakness. I think if the message can be God didn't give you a spirit of fear, God is still at work. He's at work in your weakness and don't grow weary in doing good. He loves that you come to Him in your brokenness and your weariness, and He said He'd give you rest and He does.

Roger Marsh: That was Heidi St. John, our guest on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Are you a parent? Do you find yourself overwhelmed and under appreciated? Could you use some words of encouragement right about now? Well, I'm Roger Marsh and our guest today is a Christian author, speaker, and homeschooling mother. Heidi St. John has a passion to affirm and empower moms in the Lord. She's been married to her college sweetheart, Jay, since 1989, and they have seven children together.

Roger Marsh: The St. Johns reside just outside of Vancouver, Washington where they've homeschooled their kids all the way through high school. Over the last several years, Heidi has released three books in her MomStrong collection. They include Becoming MomStrong, Prayers for the Battlefield, Staying MomStrong in the Fight for Your Family and Your Faith, and Bible Promises for Moms. The theme

throughout all of her books is helping mothers build a solid biblical foundation for their families.

Roger Marsh: In addition, Heidi and her husband, Jay, lead Firmly Planted Family Ministries. They are dedicated to training and equipping parents to disciple their children by focusing on the things of first importance, a concept from 1 Corinthians 15:3, which says, "For what I received, I passed onto you as a first importance that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." Heidi also hosts a podcast called Off The Bench which is heard by a million people every month. Here now is our own Dr. Tim Clinton with Heidi St. John here on Family Talk.

Dr. Clinton: Heidi, thank you for joining us on this edition of Family Talk.

Heidi St. John: Thanks for having me.

Dr. Clinton: Heidi, as we get started, love your passion to affirm and empower moms in the Lord and this amazing ministry, MomStrong International. I guess we could all say this, there's something about the hand that rocks the cradle that still rules the world. Isn't that true?

Heidi St. John: Yeah, it's absolutely true. Mothers right now are raising a very special generation of children and it requires a special generation of mothers and they need all the encouragement they can get.

Dr. Clinton: Heidi, you started a book series to really speak encouragement, hope, especially in the anxious mamas hearts called the MomStrong collection. It's really, really doing well. Heidi, where'd that come from? What did it get birthed out of?

Heidi St. John: You know, we have seven children and we've been raising our kids for 30 years in the Pacific Northwest. Back in 2015, I was working on a blog series and kind of some strange things happened to me and I wound up in the hospital with kind of an emergency surgery. This is a true story, so I know you guys are going to think me very, very spiritual after I tell you this. So just brace yourself. I wake up from surgery and I'm laying there and I can't really move, but my mind is just racing. And I say to my husband, "I need to write MomStrong." It just happened like that. And he was like, "Go back to bed. You should go back to sleep."

Heidi St. John: And I woke up and I'm there just doing nothing for several days and it was so cool because it was just me and the Lord. Not very many times that I'm away from my children. And it gave me a little bit of time and I started writing an outline and I was going to write a blog series, because I started a long time ago just blogging to women. I had a blog, I still do, but I'm not on it so much except for the podcast. But I started a blog called The Busy Mom. I thought, "I'm going to write this series and it's going to be called Becoming MomStrong."

Heidi St. John: Well, a few days later I get out of the hospital, I'm just recovering from surgery, I fly to an event for women in leadership down in Dallas, Texas. I meet Kay Arthur

down there and I met a woman named Elisa Morgan, who was the founder of MOPS, very wonderful women. And I said, "Hey, you guys, I have this idea," and I showed them my little outline, kind of what I wanted to do, and Kay said, "That's not a blog series, that's a book. Don't you dare put that into a blog."

Heidi St. John: And so I started thinking, "All right, well, this is, you know...". So the Lord in His providence, we got connected to a wonderful literary agent at that event. And about six months later, I had a proposal and sent it to Tyndale. They are a wonderful, wonderful publishing house to work with and it was born out of a desire for me to say, "Hey, your family's worth fighting for." And so Becoming MomStrong, how to fight with all that's in you for your family and your faith, and so that turned into a seven book series. I'm about three quarters of the way through that right now. And it's just been... yeah, it's amazing to see how many women are picking it up.

Dr. Clinton: Heidi, you've developed quite a voice, not only in writing, but you host a podcast with about a million downloads a month and you're speaking to a lot of moms, a lot of families out there. Heidi, let me ask you this, what are you hearing from moms out on the front lines right now with the pandemic and then all the insanity that has followed up since then? It's crazy out there. The world's changed a lot.

Heidi St. John: Yeah. Yeah. Well, I think mothers are sad. I hear a lot of sadness, a lot of residual sadness, and I have addressed this many times on the podcast. I am astounded and astonished at the way that we've handled the pandemic and children not being able to go to school. They're disconnected. We were created for community. We need each other. And every morning you turn on the news and they're scaring everybody to death and the ground is shifting underneath your feet. And moms are wondering, a lot of them now, instant homeschoolers. This is pandemic schooling, pandemic schooling and homeschooling are not the same thing, but I have felt just a real sense of urgency to say to Christian women in particular know God's word. It is a lamp to your feet and a light to your path, and no matter which direction the culture goes, the truth of God's word will remain the same. And that's what gives us peace. It's a steadying force.

Heidi St. John: And I've been trying to... For the last year, I mean I can't even... you guys, it's been a year since this whole thing started. I can't even believe it. I thought this will be a couple months maybe, and by June everything's going to be honky-dory and here we are, everybody's still scared to death. Fear is a spirit. The Bible teaches us and I'm sure that Timothy was shaking in his boots about what God was going to call him to do and ask him to do. And you can almost see, or at least I can, how I view it, the apostle Paul lean into Timothy and say, "Dude," I mean, that's a paraphrase, right? "God, didn't give you a spirit of fear. What's wrong with you? That's not the Lord I hear coming from you. God didn't give you a spirit of fear. Power and love and a sound mind."

Heidi St. John: And that really has been my message to mothers during the pandemic to say, "Listen, don't be overcome by fear. Fear is a spirit. And how do we tackle worry? Through worship. The antidote to worry is worship.

Dr. Clinton: I love that.

Heidi St. John: And just trying to recenter moms especially, dads too. There's a ton of men now that listen to the podcast, which is really exciting. A lot of dads listening. And just to say, "Listen, you guys. Love your families well. You've got an opportunity right now in the middle of COVID and all of this stuff to say, "We're not going to be afraid. We're going to walk this thing out. Our days have already been ordained for us." And the Lord knew it. From the time we took our first breath, the Lord knew it. We don't need to live in fear. And I think that's the message that moms need to hear, because it's rough raising kids right now.

Dr. Clinton: It's rough. Heidi, I have a daughter, Megan, who has a two-year-old. We call her Papa Girl, I call her Papa Girl. Little Olivia is her name. But Megan the other day said, "Dad, how do you think I'm doing as a mom?" And it was like... I mean, she was a little exhausted and it's amazing to watch childhood development as a grandfather. I know you have some grandchildren, you have three or so, right?

Heidi St. John: Yes, yes.

Dr. Clinton: But it's just wild for me. I think a lot of moms feel stressed. You mentioned the word anxious, anxiety, a lot of anxiety going on, but I think a lot of them are tired and often feel inadequate too in the midst of this. What do you say to a mom who's wrestling at that level?

Heidi St. John: How beautiful is it to be able to say, "Oh, I get it. Weary, boy, that's the thing right now, right?" What did Jesus say? He said, "Come to me all you who are weary and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me because my yoke is easy. My burden is light." Notice He never said it was going to be no burden. He said, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." He said that His strength is actually made perfect in our weakness. And so when women come to me and say, "I can't do this anymore. I'm not equipped, I am ill-equipped actually," I will say, "Congratulations, you're right where God wants you." God wants the glory for what happens in motherhood and when mothers realize they can't do it without the help of the Lord, they're right where God wants them.

Heidi St. John: And God does miracles in weakness, in times of weakness. And I think if the message can be God didn't give you a spirit of fear, God is still at work. He's at work in your weakness and don't grow weary in doing good. When this thing is over, we're going to look back on it and we are going to hear stories of redemption. We're going to hear stories of salvation. We're going to hear stories of healing. And to me it's an exciting time, because motherhood is exhausting in and of itself. You put the 'Rona on top of it and kids not being in

school and we've got a challenge that no one has seen in this country ever and we can rise to meet the challenge.

Heidi St. John: Christians have the answer. Jesus people should be all over the place right now. We have hope and our hope doesn't come from the government, thank goodness. Our hope comes from the Lord. And I love to turn the hearts of women back to the Lord and say, "He loves that you come to Him in your brokenness and your weariness, and He said He'd give you rest and He does."

Roger Marsh: You've been listening to a conversation between Heidi St. John and our own Dr. Tim Clinton here on Family Talk. Heidi is a homeschool mom, as well as an author, speaker, and podcast host. Today, Dr. Clinton and Heidi St. John are offering encouragement to moms who feel weary, overwhelmed, or under appreciated.

Roger Marsh: Here at Family Talk, we have dedicated the entire month of March to providing moms and dads in all walks of life with resources for their parenting journey. To learn more about these resources, go to drjamesdobson.org. That's D-R James Dobson dot O-R-G. And now back to today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. Clinton: I love to watch Julie and Megan talk. My wife, Julie, and Megan just sit down and talk a lot. But Heidi, Julie relates back to what it was like parenting them growing up, and Megan's living in this world now parenting. How is parenting, I guess, different now than it was say 20 years ago?

Heidi St. John: I don't think there's any comparison. I parented Savannah and Sierra and Skylar very differently from how I am parenting Summer, Sydney, and Saylor. And a large part of that is when I was raising Savannah, 30 years ago actually, I wasn't concerned... I didn't have the cares really of the world on me like I do now. Saylor, our youngest, she's 10, so our youngest daughter is 10. So this is crazy span, right, our oldest daughter is 30, youngest daughter is 10. People are always like, "Whoa." And they all count. You can just see their... like one, two. I'm like, "Yeah, it's 20 years. All right. So get over it." Saylor Jane, our youngest, is one of the best things that ever happened to our family. I had her in my 40s and she's keeping us young. I am having conversations with Saylor at very, very tender ages more so than I had with Savannah.

Heidi St. John: And actually moms need to do that. Years ago there was... you remember, Vogue magazine came out, Bruce Jenner on the cover of Vogue magazine and of course the headline read, "Call me Caitlyn." Remember that?

Dr. Clinton: Yep, sure do.

Heidi St. John: And I'm at a grocery store in Portland, Oregon with my kids and I'm checking out. It's like you have to run the gauntlet, when you're a mother and you go to the grocery store, when you put everything on the conveyor belt, you're like, "Wait a minute, I didn't buy 15 Snickers bars. How did that get on?" I'm trying to

keep track of all the things that they're putting on the conveyor belt that I didn't actually want. And I look over and my four-year-old daughter, wide-eyed, is staring at the cover of this magazine and she starts tugging on my jacket, "Mama, Mama." And I'm like, "Honey, just a minute." "Mama, Mama." So I look down and I'm like, "Oh, for the love." I do not want to talk about this and I definitely don't want to do it in the grocery store.

Heidi St. John: And I just felt the Holy Spirit say, "Address it right now. Address it now." And so I told my kids, "No more candy on the conveyor belt, I need to talk to Saylor." So I turn around and I got eye level with Saylor, and she said, "Mommy, why is that man dressed like a princess?" And I said, "Saylor, did God make you a boy or a girl?" And she said, "Well, He made me a girl." And I said, "Some people are confused right now and we need to pray for him. He's confused. He doesn't know if he's a boy or a girl." And she looked at me, just big eyes, and she said, "Well, someone should tell him. Someone should tell him." Just this honesty, the honesty from this child. And we prayed for him in that moment.

Heidi St. John: I think there's a right way to talk to children, a way that doesn't pit people against each other. To say, "Listen, he's confused and he needs to know that God loves him just the way he is and He made him just the way he is." And Saylor's like, "Okay." In my heart, I was like, "Now can we please stop?" I'm in Portland. I do not want to have this conversation in a grocery store with my kids. But at that moment I felt like the Lord was giving me just a word to say to my daughter. And you know what? Mothers don't like these conversations. They're very, very hard conversations. They can be uncomfortable, but you guys, we have to have them. We have to have them. If we don't inoculate our children against the lies of the world, the lies will become normal to them and then we'll be undoing the lies and I would rather inoculate my kids against them.

Dr. Clinton: Being emotionally present, and by the way, the busy preoccupied parent misses a cue, many a cue, an opportunity to be in those moments. And Heidi, I think you're right.

Dr. Clinton: Hey, you're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, your host. Our special guest today, Heidi St. John. She's a Christian author, speaker, homeschooler mother with a passion to affirm and empower moms in the Lord. I love that. And you'll want to listen to her podcast and a whole lot more and make sure you're learning about her MomStrong series, which is really encouraging a lot of moms across the country and around the globe.

Dr. Clinton: Heidi, as we come back, the secret to being a strong mom. I know you've got a lot of things and we're going to cover a few of them, but at the heart of all of it, when you think about it, mom, get this piece right here right. What is that piece?

Heidi St. John: When I think about being a strong mom for my kids, the first thing I want them to know is that they were created on purpose with a purpose. I think moms

need to know who they are in Christ. The world has all kinds of labels right now. We're really good at labels. And we label Christians and we label groups of people. And if you're going to be strong for the battle, the first thing you have to do is know God's word for yourself and know who you are in Christ as you, as who God created you to be. I like to tell moms you can't pass on what you don't possess. The battle is fierce right now, and it's no time to play around and it's no time to... It used to be, when I was raising Savannah, we could get together and have tea and make a craft and talk about how hard motherhood was and pray and go home. We can't do that anymore. We need to be talking about the real issues that are happening from a biblical perspective and engaging these women in the word of God.

Heidi St. John: And so the goal, at least to me, for motherhood right now if we want to walk with the Lord, the goal is to know His word so that we can pass it on to our children so that when they leave our homes and they walk into this world that is so broken and so off course, they actually become lights to the world. They become a light to a broken world. They're not going out as confused and broken as the rest of the people are around them, they can offer hope and healing. And that starts at home. It all starts at home.

Heidi St. John: And the world has really relegated motherhood to little more than a stopover on the highway of life. It's something that you just do while you're waiting to do the real thing. I can't tell you how many people would say to me, they'd find out how many kids I had and they'd say, "But what do you do?" Really? That's what I'm doing. Diapers to diploma, that's what I'm doing. Laundry and dishes, but what was happening in the midst of the laundry and the diapers and the dishes and all of the moments when I just felt like I cannot do this one more second and the moments that I wanted to give up, God was doing something. And He was doing something in me and He was doing something in my children and doing something in our family. And I want to encourage mom, God's at work. He's doing something. So when you get discouraged, lean in and stay in there. It's a battle and it's worth fighting.

Dr. Clinton: Heidi, I love what you said. You can't give what you don't have. And Heidi, once you square that piece away, the other piece is you've got to be attuned to each child uniquely. You have what, seven children? They're all different.

Heidi St. John: Yes.

Dr. Clinton: And making sure that you're connected with each of them individually becomes the real crux of the matter here, because they need heavy doses of you, uniquely and individually. Close us out, Heidi, with a challenge of what it means to be emotionally connected to your son and/or daughter.

Heidi St. John: I think it ends up being all about commitment at the end of the day. Earlier I said that the culture has really reduced motherhood to a stop over on the highway to something else, and really it is a destination. It is the destination for your children. The voice that you are pouring into them is going to be the voice that

they hear for the rest of their lives. So I'm always telling moms, this commitment that you're making is a real commitment. It is a sacred commitment and we need to stop looking at motherhood as just this thing that we do. I keep seeing moms on the internet and everything just it's wine o'clock. Our children are hearing that. They're hearing that we're saying that, they're seeing that we're saying it, and I would love to see this generation of mothers lean into motherhood.

Heidi St. John: You guys, it's a season. It's a season. And there were moments when I thought, "I am not going to live through this. It's not going to be over." And the Lord was so gracious and so good to me. The Bible teaches us that God's blessings are found inside God's boundaries and the boundary that He has set up for mothers is a beautiful one, in this small season of time that we have to lean into your children. So these are conversations that you have with them at the end of the day. How are you doing? Let them come and sit on your bed and talk to you at night. Our teenagers still do it. When they're 13, 14, 15, they're going to come sit on your bed and they're going to want to have those important conversations late into the evening. Those are the moments in which you are solidifying your place in your child's life for the rest of your life.

Heidi St. John: And hopefully, by the grace of God, long after the last time you have to make their bed, they're going to be coming back to you and they're going to be asking you for encouragement, asking you for advice, and for counsel. They're going to become your very best friends. But you do the work on the front end and it is work, but it's worth it. There's nothing that we do in this life that's worth doing that's easy, nothing. And I think we want the easy button.

Heidi St. John: For me, it was a surrender and there were many years of my life that I said no to things that I wanted to do and those no's that I said to the other things were a yes to my children. They were to say, yes, I'm going to sacrifice this part of my life for this season for my children. It is something that I think mothers, if we can just change the narrative to how precious it is and how fleeting it is, I think moms would begin to see their roles differently.

Dr. Clinton: I can't believe our time's gone already, Heidi. But tomorrow we get more words of hope and encouragement for moms from Heidi St. John. In the meantime, Heidi, if they want to learn more about you, your ministry, and your resources, where can they go?

Heidi St. John: Well, you can find me at MomStrong International. It's a Bible study, subscription Bible study program that I do every month. Also, you can find me at Off The Bench with Heidi St. John, it's my podcast. And of course, heidistjohn.com.

Dr. Clinton: Heidi, thank you for joining us.

Heidi St. John: Thank you.

Roger Marsh: You've been listening to Heidi St. John here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Heidi is the author of the book *Becoming MomStrong*. Were you as struck by the story she shared about her wide-eyed four-year-old daughter as I was, when she pointed at the cover photo of *Vanity Fair*? You know the one featuring Bruce Jenner dressed as a woman. Heidi's heart must have sunk right there in the grocery store. Hearing her daughter ask, "Why is that man dressed like a princess?" is truly a snapshot of the craziness in our culture today. And yet Heidi's willingness to address her daughter's question in both a truthful and compassionate way is a powerful example for all of us. She affirmed God's design and led her daughter to pray for Mr. Jenner on the spot in the supermarket checkout line. In doing so, she underscored the need to be sensitive as a Christian mom.

Roger Marsh: Now to learn more about Heidi St. John, her book, *Becoming MomStrong*, or to hear any portion of the broadcast you might've missed today, visit our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org. That's D-R James Dobson dot O-R-G /broadcast.

Roger Marsh: Here at Family Talk we know that parenting is not an easy task. That's why we've dedicated the month of March to providing moms and dads in all walks of life with the resources for the journey with their kids. One of those resources is the book *Nightlight For Parents*. It's a daily devotional written by Dr. Dobson and his wife, Shirley, that's filled with encouraging insights and spiritual wisdom. It offers heartwarming stories, biblical truth, and practical parenting advice. *Nightlight For Parents* is available as our way of thanking you for your gift of \$20 or more to Family Talk. So go to drjamesdobson.org/nightlightforparents to get your copy today.

Roger Marsh: And be sure to join us again tomorrow for part two of our conversation with Heidi St. John. You won't want to miss Heidi sharing what Christian parents can do to influence and change our culture for the good. For everyone on the team here at Family Talk, I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for making us a part of your day and for doing so each and every day, inviting us into your homes and taking us with you wherever you go. God's blessings to you all, and be sure to join us again tomorrow for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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

Dr. Clinton: Hi, I'm Dr. Tim Clinton for the James Dobson Family Institute. Who inspires you on matters of faith, family, and culture? If you don't already get it, sign up for Dr. Dobson's monthly newsletter at drjamesdobson.org. Each month you're going to receive insight and news that impacts your family and solid advice that you can trust. Whether it's wisdom for parents, tips for building a lasting marriage, or discernment on issues your family may be facing, you're going to find direction, encouragement, and more every month. Visit drjamesdobson.org and sign up for that monthly newsletter today. And again, that's drjamesdobson.org. You'll be glad you did.

Dr. Dobson: If you're looking for that perfect gift for your wife, how about giving her a few hours of help with the housework? I think any family with small children should seriously consider getting some domestic help for mom if there is any reasonable way to set aside the money for it. Even two, three or four hours of help per week can make the difference between coping and slowly drowning in a sea of chaos. In modern families, the demands of running the home and caring for children still fall heavily on the mother. She faces years of dirty diapers, runny noses, trips to the pediatrician, and the need for cupcakes at the school party. Any woman will be a better mother if she can share the burden of routine chores with someone else.

Dr. Dobson: But how can middle-class families afford house cleaning and babysitting services when money is so tight? One possibility is hiring competent high school students instead of older adults. By working with the counseling center at the nearest senior high school, it shouldn't be difficult to find a mature teenager who can handle some weekly housekeeping at an economical cost and give mom a few hours of free time. I can't imagine a better expenditure, especially for mothers of preschoolers. It might mean the dad has to put off buying a new power saw or that tennis racket he's wanted, but I think he'll find that the happiness in his home will make the sacrifice worthwhile. As the saying goes, the wife he saves may be his own.

Roger Marsh: Hear more at drjamesdobson.org.