



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Praying in Uncertain Times

Guest(s): Shirley Dobson

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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: Welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. We all face challenges and obstacles in life, don't we? Perhaps you are struggling right now to make ends meet, or you feel like you're not connecting with your spouse the way you used to. Perhaps you need to make a little extra time to spend with a certain family member, or a friend who needs extra care and attention right now.

Well, whatever it is that you're facing, remember, one of the most powerful tools that we have in our weaponry to overcome obstacles, is prayer. Think about this for just a moment: have you reflected recently on how much time you actually have been able to spend with the Lord in prayer of late? Well, on today's program, we're going to hear a classic conversation featuring our own Dr. James Dobson, and a very special guest, his wife, Shirley Dobson. Shirley will explain how prayer is something that should be a constant in our walk with God, and how we can find peace in a world that continues to spiral out of control.

Now of course, Mrs. Dobson is the former chair of the National Day of Prayer Task Force, and she's written several books including the one that we're going to be talking about today, *Certain Peace in Uncertain Times*. Shirley Dobson has a passion for prayer, and I'm confident you will find much value in today's program. Let's join our own Dr. James Dobson, and his wife Shirley Dobson, right here, right now on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Today, we're here to talk about Shirley's first solo effort in a book called *Certain Peace in Uncertain Times*. Shirley, you have been a busy lady, haven't you?

Shirley Dobson: Well, it's always a privilege to be here, Jim. And yes, I have been busy, busier than I like to be. I have decided that you are the writer in the family, not me. Jim, you have a basketball game on and you just write profusely while you're listening to the radio, and watching it on TV. And when I write it's like get out of the room, shut the door, take the phone off the hook, keep out. And I found out that writing is a lot of hard work.

Dr. James Dobson: I do like to have the television going, because I sit there for eight or 10 hours straight, and something's got to keep me there. So a football game or something that I can every now and then stop and look at, some men, I'm one of them, cannot think about it until I'm ready to. Anyway, it's a different approach to writing. But Shirley, this book has a very provocative title, *Certain Peace in Uncertain Times*, which kind of makes a statement in and of itself. What's behind that? What's the meaning of that title?

Shirley Dobson: Well Jim, we're living in a very anxious age. And sometimes it seems that each day brings a new crisis, which fills us with worry and stress. And the big question is, how do we live in peace in an out of control world? And there was a survey not too long ago taken of women, that showed that their three biggest concerns were one, being in a world out of control, two, they felt like their families were out of control, and three, they felt like their lives were out of control.

And I remember, oh, some time ago a single mom calling me up at midnight, and she was weeping and in tears. And she said she just couldn't cope, that she just couldn't deal with everything that was being thrown at her. And what I've found is she's not alone. At our National Day of Prayer office, we are receiving prayer requests from people who have lost their jobs, their health is failing, their families are breaking up, their kids are in trouble, and the list goes on and on.

Dr. James Dobson: Is this anxiety that you're talking about, just characteristic of women? You referred there a couple of times to women, and it is true, you get maybe eight or 10 women in a living room and you provide just the right atmosphere, and if you ask the right questions in just a few minutes, you will hear the stresses that are going on. It's almost universal. But is this only with regard to women, or is it broader than that?

Shirley Dobson: Not according to recent polls. One researcher found that a third of the U.S. population in the last year experienced a panic attack, and more than 19 million Americans suffer from some kind of debilitating anxiety disorder. And someone told me just not too long ago that they read a piece of research where 60 to 90% of all the medical office visits are stress related. So, it touches both men and women.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, that raises a very important question, Shirley. Why is there so much insecurity today? Life has always been stressful, that's hardly new. But it does seem worse today, there's more panic attacks now than ever before. And it is relevant to ask why. If I may venture my opinion here, I am really convinced that one of the primary reasons that we're going through this has to do with the incredible pace at which we run. It leaves us with no physical or emotional reserve, and it also results in a kind of spiritual poverty. The farther we get from God, the more insecurity we feel.

Shirley Dobson: But Jim, there's an antidote for this anxious age, and it connects us with the greatest source of peace, hope, and security. And that antidote is prayer. When I have a physical problem, I take the time to make an appointment with a doctor, and I go in and I listen to him. I could try to figure it out on my own, and look in the medicine cabinet for this or that, but I know that he has the answer usually.

Well, it's the same thing with prayer. It takes time. And if we want to continue to carry our own stress and worry, then the Lord will let us. But He is there to help us carry those burdens. Someone said that God lowers a rope when we are falling, and He also lets us swing from that rope when things are going well. And so, we need to take the time to go to the Lord in prayer. And I love Philippians 4:6, which says, "Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding," it's supernatural, "Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Now, that is a recipe for good emotional and mental health.

Dr. James Dobson: It really is, Shirley. You remember I gave a devotional in our neighborhood not too long ago on anxiety. And I went to the concordance in my computer, and I found I think 35 or 40 references to fear alone. And nearly all of them said, "Fear not. Fear not. Fear not." That's all through the Scripture. Not for my physical health, for my finances, for the money to pay for my family's needs, for anything, for my job, "be anxious for nothing." How does one do that? You just don't say, okay, I'm not going to be anxious. You do it by drawing near to the Lord. And through the avenue that He's provided, called prayer. I don't understand why the king of the universe, who has everything and has no needs, is mindful of me. He's thinking about my thoughts, and He knows what I have need of before I even ask. Why would He do that?

Shirley Dobson: And we don't have to make an appointment with His secretary. We don't have to send up an email. We don't have to get a waiting line. It's always available.

Dr. James Dobson: Shirley, you have a great grasp of that understanding that we just talked about. And it goes back a long way in your life, and some of our listeners have heard it and know about it, but others don't. Where does this love for prayer and love for the Lord come from? Find the roots in your childhood and share them with us.

Shirley Dobson: Well Jim, as you remember, my childhood was very turbulent, as my family struggled to deal with my father's drinking problem. And my mother knew if she was going to raise my brother and me pretty much as a single parent, that she needed all the help she could get. So she searched around for a little church, and not too far from our home, she found a little evangelical church and she enrolled us there in Sunday school. And that's where I first learned about Jesus. I learned that He loved me, that He knew me by name, that He had seen every tear, and that He answered prayer. And just as a little six-year-old, I remember

going into my bedroom and getting on my knees, and praying for my family during that time.

Dr. James Dobson: And one of those prayers was for a husband someday, who would love her and care for her. And she was praying for me at six years of age. I was seven and I was out there someplace, and she took that need to the Lord.

Shirley Dobson: Well, I remember being invited to some of the members' homes on Sunday, and I saw what a loving family could really be like, and I really desired that. I knew there was something missing in my own home. And even at that young age, I started praying for a husband. Because I knew someday I would grow up, and I wanted to have a home like I saw. And I also prayed if my father would not come to the Lord, that he would bring someone into our life to provide stability and love. And God answered those two prayers for me. You are one of them. One of the greatest blessings and answer to prayer in my life. And the other is my stepfather, Joe, who's made a great dad for all of us.

Dr. James Dobson: Joe Cobista. He was a gift to Shirley and the family, was not a believer at the time, but came to know the Lord. And we're going to be together throughout eternity. Shirl, talk about the concept of fasting within a family. I know that's very, very important to you, and a very tender subject for you.

Shirley Dobson: Well, I think the greatest gift that a mother can give to her children is the gift of prayer. And because I've experienced what prayer has done in my own life, I wanted to give that to my children. Somehow the Lord impressed upon me that if we were going to be in a family ministry, where would the enemy most like to attack? It would probably be in our family. I just felt impressed by the Lord to put a prayer covering over our family.

And first, you started fasting one day a week, if you'll remember when our children were young, and you carried that load for many years until it became pretty hard on you, and then I picked it up. And so I set aside still even today, one day a week for prayer and fasting for our family. And the Lord has been so fateful. There's been many times that our kids have been in harm's way, and I really feel like those days of fasting and prayer have protected them.

Dr. James Dobson: Shirley, I remember one such instance. You and I went to bed one night, we were pretty worn out, and we suddenly realized just before we went to sleep that we had not prayed on that day. And we made a habit of praying every day for our kids, and for a lot of things. Well, we got out of bed and got on our knees, and we prayed. And we prayed that night for our daughter who was out with a girlfriend. We just asked for the Lord's protection. Danae was a teenager by that time, and we just asked the Lord to be with them wherever they were at that time.

We found out later that they had gone to a hamburger place in southern California, drive-in, and had gotten hamburgers. And then they drove to

someplace and stopped, and they were sitting there eating these hamburgers, and they heard a clunk. In a few minutes, a guy with John Lennon type glasses, little round glasses and kind of a hairy guy, got out from under their car and came over to the door. And they had it locked. And of course, they started the car and left. And when Danae came home and told us about that, we had been praying for her at the time that that guy got out from under the car. They found out later that the police were looking for him, and that's why he was under the car. And that door was locked, or he could have gotten in.

Now, the implication is that nothing difficult will ever happen to you if you pray. And that's not true. There were times, the best example is Jesus praying in Gethsemane, where He said, "If it be thy will, let this cup pass from me." And the Lord said no, because it was in His good pleasure that Christ would die for our sins. So you pray and you relax, and you give it to the Lord. And sometimes He says yes, and sometimes He says no, and sometimes He says wait, but whatever He says is right. And you can rest in that, even when it is most difficult.

Shirley Dobson:

You're right, Jim. God sometimes doesn't always answer our prayer. But I think the greatest answer to prayer that I've ever experienced apart from the two prayers I prayed when I was little, was the night of your stroke. And I'll never forget that night, it was one of the most frightening experiences I've ever been through. Not knowing if I was going to lose you, not knowing if you were going to have to go on to months or even years of speech therapy and physical rehabilitation.

And I remember driving home from the hospital at five in the morning, and crying out to the Lord. I think that experience challenged my faith more than any I have ever experienced. Because I was in prayer to the Lord and saying, "Lord, how could you allow this man that is so gifted in communication, in writing, in all these creative arts, how could you allow this to happen to him? How could you allow this particular part of the brain which houses who he is, his radio broadcasting, his speaking, his writing? How could you allow this to happen when he's reaching millions for you?"

It was a great challenge to my faith. But somebody said, "Trust the Lord, even though you can't track Him." And I just trusted Him. And I have to say that through that experience, I felt the grace of God carrying me. I made decisions that I didn't even realize I was making, with such calmness, and coolness, and wisdom that just came from the Lord and through prayer. Little did I know that the Lord was getting ready to do an incredible miracle in our lives. By the next night, no one could believe it, the neurologist couldn't believe it, the technicians at the hospital couldn't believe it. By the next night you were speaking, and essentially back to normal.

Dr. James Dobson:

There are some in our listening audience who have been in that situation of not being able to find a word. I knew everything that was going on. I was not

confused at all about that, certainly not the next morning. But I couldn't even name a pencil, a pen, a nickel, a heart. I couldn't identify anything. I couldn't find the words. My cardiologist got down in my ear and said, "You have had a major stroke." And I knew what that meant, and I didn't know whether I would ever speak again. And yet, within an hour or two, by 10 o'clock in the morning, I was starting to speak. And by four o'clock in the afternoon, the speech was back. We have good reason in our family, clearly, to believe in the power of prayer. And Shirley, that's what you were trying to write about in *Certain Peace in Uncertain Times*, isn't it?

Shirley Dobson: That's what I experienced, Jim, when you had your stroke. And I did have a peace, peace that passes all understanding. It was a supernatural peace. And I feel like prayer is like a bank account. You're fasting, you're praying, you're taking the time to have that intimate relationship with the Lord, and then when you need to draw on that bank account, it's there. And that's what I drew on during that difficult time.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, this is a good little book, Shirley. I congratulate you. I'm grateful that you were willing to invest the effort to prepare this book, and I believe it will be very useful to the Lord. You describe in the second half of the book, a four-step approach to prayer that's based on the acronym of PRAY. We don't have much time. Just very quickly, summarize those.

Shirley Dobson: Well, it's really four steps of prayer. And it spells PRAY. P equals praise, R, repent, A, ask, and Y, yield. I was thinking about the praise aspect of it. In ancient times when a person was going to have an audience with a king, they usually brought a gift to show honor and appreciation for who He was. And so, that's what praise is all about, that we should come before the Lord with our praise and with our adulation. Psalms 150 verse 6 says, "Let everything that breathes praise the Lord." Psalms 104 says, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him and bless His name." He invites us into conversation with Him, because it brings Him pleasure. I love Proverbs 5:8, which says, "The prayer of the upright is His delight." He actually delights in our praise.

Dr. James Dobson: That's the gift that we bring to Him. He has everything. We can't bring Him a tangible gift. We can give to one another, we can give to His causes, and we bring our praise to Him.

Shirley Dobson: Right. We bring our sacrifice of praise to Him. And when we focus on Him, we go from being self-centered, with all of our worry and stress, to God-centered, which gives us that unspeakable joy and peace.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, it's P-R-A-Y. We just heard about the P word, praise, and we're not going to have time for the other three. People are going to have to read about that in the book. Well, let's see if we can make time just for the R, which is repentance.

Because you've got a story about you and me that I don't think has been told before, having to do with repentance. Take a run at it.

Shirley Dobson: Well, first of all, repentance is recognizing that we've done something wrong, and being truly sorry for it and making amends for it. And I remember when we were first married, you didn't like mayonnaise. And you asked me to go in the kitchen and make you a tuna sandwich. And I thought, how can you hold tuna together without just a dab of mayonnaise? So I snuck about a teaspoon into that mixture of mayonnaise, and I made you this great sandwich with lettuce and tomatoes. And I brought it into you, not thinking that you'd ask me. And I remember your distinct words. You said, "Shirley, did you put mayonnaise on the sandwich?" And I said, "Jim, I know you don't like mayonnaise. Of course I didn't put mayonnaise in your sandwich." And that was the end of the story, and you ate the sandwich and seemed to be very satisfied. But I just really felt terrible about that. And finally it got so bad that I just had to come and confess to you. Do you remember what you said to me?

Dr. James Dobson: Yes. As a matter of fact, I do. I mean, big deal, she put a little bit of mayonnaise in my tuna. I couldn't even taste it. But it was a big deal to me, because truthfulness is extremely important. You've got to be able to trust each other. And to me, it was a fundamental issue that we needed to come to terms with between us. Because if you'll lie about mayonnaise, you may lie about something a lot bigger. And Shirley didn't understand that, and we talked it through. It was not an angry confrontation, but it was an intense one. And I think, Shirl, it resulted in your asking me for forgiveness, and also asking the Lord to forgive you, because you did flat out lie to me. Now, some people will be listening to us out there and will say, "Big deal. You got upset over that?" Well, as a matter of fact, I did, and for the reasons I just described.

Shirley Dobson: Well, it was a flat out lie. And lying is a sin, and I've tried to live my life by a higher standard since then.

Dr. James Dobson: We're out of time. I would love to talk about the A and the Y of that acronym, but we're not going to be able to do it. Shirley, we just have time to have you describe the 31-day prayer devotional at the end of the book.

Shirley Dobson: Well, at the end of the book, there's 31 days of prayer. There are devotions on prayer, using the PRAY acronym at the end. There are great thoughts on prayer, they're not all mine, they're by great godly men and women. And then it ends with a prayer using the PRAY acronym. And I think our listeners, if they want a richer, deeper meaning, if they want more peace in their life, using that 31 days of prayer, they'll be amazed at the difference it'll make in their lives.

Roger Marsh: Well, what a great reminder that prayer shifts the focus off of ourselves and puts it back on God. You've been listening to a classic conversation featuring Dr. James Dobson and his wife, Shirley Dobson, here on Family Talk.

God is in control, even in a world that seems more and more uncertain at times. As we read in Philippians chapter 4 verse 6, the Apostle Paul encourages us, "Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything. With thankful hearts, offer up your prayers and requests to God." And don't forget to thank Him for His answers. All of us can find peace and reassurance when we offer up our prayers and concerns to the Lord. Now, if you would like to make a specific prayer request for yourself or for someone you know, remember you can always reach a member of our trained customer care team when you call 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Or you can reach out to us via our website, drjamesdobson.org. And while you're online with us, remember, you can also find helpful resources and free downloads as well. Please don't hesitate to contact us. We are definitely here for you. Again, that's drjamesdobson.org.

Now, as we've been hearing about uncertain times, I want to highlight a type of relationship that can sometimes be on unsteady ground, and this is between a parent and an extra effort child. Raising kids is already hard enough. Even children who are sweet and mild-mannered, come with their own set of challenges from time to time. But if your son or daughter is a strong-willed child, and a defiant child, you know they can wear you out emotionally very quickly. And if you have one or more of these independent youngsters or adolescents in your home, well, you know how difficult life can be.

But be assured, there is hope. The Dr. James Dobson Family Institute wants to walk alongside you as the parent of an extra effort child, especially during these important child-rearing years. And to help you do so, we have developed a new 10-day email series based on Dr. Dobson's best-selling book called *The New Strong-Willed Child*. This series is designed to equip you to wisely lead your kids through even the toughest of trials. Now, you can sign up for free when you visit drjamesdobson.org/strongwilledchild. That's drjamesdobson.org/strongwilledchild. I'm Roger Marsh, and from all of us here at the JDFI, thank you for making us a part of your day. Be sure to join us again next time right here, for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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

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