



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** What Women Should Know About Men – Part 1

**Guest(s):** Shaunti Feldhahn

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Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. You know, God made men and women both to think and act very differently. In Genesis 1:27, we read, "So God created mankind in His own image. In the image of God, He created them, male and female, He created them." These differences are beautiful, and when we understand that, we see male and female strengths and their unique characteristics complement each other in such a divine way, however many people struggle with these differences and this leads to many issues in relationships and in marriages. Over the next three days here on Family Talk, we're going to revisit a classic conversation featuring our own Dr. James Dobson and social researcher, author and speaker Shaunti Feldhahn. They'll be discussing what women need to know about men in order to maintain healthy and successful marriages. And ladies, even if you're single, understanding these important traits can help you in many areas of communicating with other guys, too.

Now, Shaunti Feldhahn is a Harvard graduate and a best-selling author, and during this three-part interview, we're going to hear facts and information from her book entitled *For Women Only: What You Need to Know About the Inner Lives of Men*. Well, here now is Dr. James Dobson with more in his introduction of Shaunti Feldhahn, right here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: In 1974, I published a book called *What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew about Women*. And in it I described what a woman thinks and feels and what she needs from her husband. Shirley had a lot of input to that book, and it was written right at the time that the so-called Women's Liberation Movement was sweeping through the secular media. And I took on almost every component that was being advanced by the radical feminists at that time. And my book was at one end of the universe and that movement was at the other. And to my delight, my book became the number one Christian bestseller in America, and it stayed in the top 10 for I think eight years and sold more than a million copies. And I obviously touched a nerve there, and it's still available in the bookstores

today, even though most of the women's liberation agenda has been discredited.

The most important foolish notion was the idea that males and females are identical except for the ability to bear children. Everybody was saying that at that time, and of course that's been totally discredited now, but it seemed for a while like the whole world was going to buy into that idea, and I opposed it and said so and gave some biological and physiological reasons for it, and emotional reasons why I disagreed. Another equally ridiculous belief was that women didn't need men and they'd be better off without them. Gloria Steinem wrote that phrase that was quoted in newspapers all across the country, which said, "A woman needs a man..." Like what?

Shaunti Feldhahn: Like a fish needs a bicycle.

Dr. James Dobson: Like a fish needs a bicycle. Yeah. Can you imagine that? That's what they believe, that's what they taught, and it's what many, many people seem to accept even within the Christian community, especially Christian colleges. I heard that more than I wanted to hear. I've always said that I have not said or written anything particularly new. When people come up to me on the street and thank me for what I've written and what I've said, really all I've done is put it in a new package, but those ideas have been around for thousands of years, and the radical feminists at that time were contradicting everything that you find in the scripture. And so that was the source of my book.

But now, there is a woman who's come out with a book that I could have written. In fact, she said many things here that go beyond what I would have written in the mid 1970s because she really has a fix on that sequel that I talked about. This one is called *For Women Only: What You Need to Know About the Inner Lives of Men* by Shaunti Feldhahn. Shaunti, we're delighted to have you here. Your book is creating a real stir, isn't it?

Shaunti Feldhahn: It is creating a bit of a stir. It's really just tapping into this fascination that I think all of us women have about what is our husband really thinking and feeling.

Dr. James Dobson: You see why I came at the introduction from the direction I did because that's what I was trying to say to men about their wives, and you are now giving us the counterpart to that. Where'd you get the information? Let's start with your survey.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Well, it's interesting. It actually started even before the survey because it started when I wrote my last novel called *Lights of 10th Street*, and one of my main characters was a guy, a good Christian husband and father. And as a woman, you realize how little you really understand about what a guy is thinking when you have to write their thoughts. I couldn't just say what this character did, I had to write what he was thinking in a certain situation and what do I know about what a guy would be thinking in that situation?

Dr. James Dobson: How long had you been married by that time?

Shaunti Feldhahn: I'd been married at that point over eight years.

Dr. James Dobson: So what you're saying is it is possible for a woman to live with her husband for years and not fully comprehend what he's thinking.

Shaunti Feldhahn: You know what? In all honesty, after I wrote the book and after I started understanding some of this, which I'll explain just a second, and I do talks with women and I've had women come up to me and say they've been married for 30 years and didn't realize some of this. And here's actually how I came at it, was I realized I didn't understand what this character would be thinking in a given situation, so I would ask my husband Jeff, or we'd be out with another couple, I'd ask the other husband, I'd say, "Okay, can I ask you what would you be thinking in this situation?" And as he started to explain what he'd really be in his inner self, what he'd really be thinking or feeling, my mouth would be dropping open. And pretty soon, the guy's wife's mouth would be dropping open. We'd say, "That's what you're thinking?" It was this huge surprise.

Dr. James Dobson: Did he validate for you what you were finding?

Shaunti Feldhahn: Oh, absolutely. As I went on and I did more and more research, and pretty soon I'm going up to the guys behind the counter at Starbucks and saying, "What would you be thinking in this situation?" And everything that I was finding seemed so consistent, that many of the men, no matter what age they were, if they were married, not married, black, white, Christian, non-Christian, they all seem to be saying similar things. And my husband Jeff was saying, "Yeah, this is really how we think."

Dr. James Dobson: And in fact, you surveyed 400 men.

Shaunti Feldhahn: 400 men, scientific survey.

Dr. James Dobson: And then you came at it again and surveyed 400 church going men.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Church going men, exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: And the findings of those two groups were pretty much the same.

Shaunti Feldhahn: They were very similar. It was really fascinating to me because there were a lot of fascinating things in this book, but kind of also challenging that I found out. And there's a lot of wishful thinking, "Well, surely Christian men don't think this way." And it really was very similar across all the groups. God just created men and women different, like you said.

Dr. James Dobson: Can you imagine the fact that it was a cultural movement a little over 20 years ago that Christians thought males and females are the same?

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah. Well, and what also was fascinating to me about the whole women's movement is that I think it gave us as women this strange idea, I'm guessing it came from the women's movement, this strange idea that we, women are really the ones who are good at relationships and we, women are really the ones who have the interpersonal skills. So if there's a problem in the relationship, it's his fault. And we come to our marriages and our relationships with this idea that he's just got to learn to relate better. And what we're saying is he's got to relate like me. And the way that God created you guys to relate is just as legitimate, and it really is about time for us women to grow up a little bit. And there's a lot of things in this whole message that are fun and fascinating. Women are really excited about it, but it's really challenging for us as Christian women to step out into maturity on some of these things where maybe our assumptions have been wrong the entire span of our marriage.

Dr. James Dobson: Does that notion make women angry?

Shaunti Feldhahn: You know what? In most cases, it doesn't because I do think that we are in most cases willing to be challenged. Here's what it really is. We simply are clueless. And I tell this to guys all the time, and they hardly believe me, but it's true. And the women... Really most women don't recognize the countless ways that they really do maybe tear their husbands down or don't support them the way they need to be supported simply because we do not understand how they're receiving what we're doing. The reason that I could write this book, honestly, it's all about things we, women don't get. Only a woman can get what we don't get.

I mean, honestly, as I was learning this stuff, and I'd go to my husband Jeff, and I'd explain what I was learning and I'd say, "Wow, is this true?" And his response in most cases was, "What about this did you not get before?" And I found out that most men really, truly don't realize why their wives would do these things that conveyed disrespect or convey that they didn't trust them or conveyed that they wanted to tear them down. And women just have no idea that that's what we're saying.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you've used that word respect several times now.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: So that was obviously one of the major findings that you came up with. Explain it.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Well, it's interesting. This actually first came up in my head when I was 22 years old. I was a brand new believer. I was right out of college and I was on a retreat, a single young adults retreat. Well, on the theme of relationships, which as you can imagine was of interest to the single young adults. And the speaker was a very wise guy, and he said, "I'm going to put the men on one side of the room and the women on the other side of the room, and I'm going to ask you this question. And it's a hard question, okay? If you had to, would you rather feel

alone and unloved in the world, or would you rather feel inadequate and disrespected?" Okay, two bad choices, but which is the least bad? And as a woman, I hear that and I go, "Well, really, what kind of a choice is that? I mean, who's ever going to choose to feel unloved as their top thing?"

And so the man turns to the men's side of the room, and he says, "Okay, men. Who here would rather feel alone and unloved?" And every man in the place raised their hands. And you heard this giant gasp from the women's side of the room. And then he turned to the women's side of the room and said, "Who here would rather feel alone and unloved?" And almost no one raised their hands. They all said that they would rather, if they had to, feel inadequate or disrespected. And that was the first clue I had about this fundamental truth that I know you've covered on your program before, that really we women most want to be loved and cherished, but our men most want to feel respected by us and feel trusted by us. So that's the first topic I cover in this book.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you validate that in the survey to 800 men?

Shaunti Feldhahn: I did. I actually asked the same question that that retreat speaker had so many years ago and got the same answers. Yeah, it ended up being about three quarters of men would end up making that choice that if they had to, that they would rather trade away love in order to feel our respect.

Dr. James Dobson: Can you explain it?

Shaunti Feldhahn: You know what? I honestly think that it's because it is the way that God created them. I think that there is this need that goes so deep into the heart of a man to feel that support and admiration from his wife. And here's honestly, and I can't explain it in terms of why God created them this way, but here's one thing that I found. This idea, and I know that you've had Emerson Eggerichs on, he and I talked before I wrote the book, and one of the things he said that hit me really hard was this whole idea that in our culture we have this idea that love must be unconditional, but respect must be earned.

And I think probably most of us would've probably agreed with that idea. And instead biblically, I realized that is a completely unbiblical idea. And in fact, in Ephesians 5, that great long passage on marriage, one of the things that was fascinating to me to see was that over and over and over again, Paul tells husbands, love your wives, love your wives unconditionally as Christ loved the church. And then he tells wives, respect your husbands. Never once, ever in that passage does God tell wives, love your husbands, because God knows that this is what we women really need a little extra help on. We really need to be mandated.

Dr. James Dobson: Isn't it amazing that the Apostle Paul had a fix on the differences between men and women, even back there? He didn't need a survey of 800 men to figure that

out. He came up with it because that is the way God made us and the Lord revealed it to Paul.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Well, here's one of the things that's fascinating to me, because again, we women are clueless. And I will say, by the way, to any man out there who's listening to this broadcast, have grace with your wives while we are learning this, because most of us really do respect and trust the men in our lives and really don't recognize that we are sometimes conveying the opposite. Let me give you a silly example. Okay? But it's one that probably most of the women in your listening audience will recognize. It's that whole thing of he's driving in circles for half an hour and refuses to stop and ask for directions. And we women are in the passenger seat going, "Please, honey, just stop and ask for directions."

And what the guys were telling me is that what the guy is accurately hearing when we say that is, "I don't trust you." I realized, wait a minute, that's exactly it. It's a choice. Am I going to choose to trust him or not? One of the other things that I've heard from several guys is we women are worried we're going to be late for the party or whatever. How can I let them just go around in circles? And guys often said, "I'm not stupid. I've got a clock on the dashboard, too." And it's really an issue for us women to choose to demonstrate that trust, that respect.

Dr. James Dobson: And you feel that that scenario is played out in a thousand different situations.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Many different ways.

Dr. James Dobson: Where a woman is unknowingly treating her husband with a lack of respect, and he's irritated by that, but he didn't come out and say it. He doesn't say to her in the front seat of the car, "Look, you're treating me disrespectfully."

Shaunti Feldhahn: You're disrespecting me.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, he gets angry about it.

Shaunti Feldhahn: He does. This was something that was really fascinating to me as I recognized the many ways, God help me, the many ways that I have shown disrespect to my husband and never intended to, and how I didn't recognize that that's what I was doing because again, I was just blind to this. And instead, one of the things that I recognize is that we women, we will tend to cry in the middle of an argument and we think that's okay. We don't think it's okay when our husbands get angry. We think it evidences a lack of control. And instead, and I think this is another thing that maybe I was talking to Emerson Eggerichs about back at the early days of this, is that crying is a woman's response to feeling unloved and anger and shutting down is a man's response to feeling disrespected. And suddenly it was like, okay, I get it.

Dr. James Dobson: That's good stuff.

Shaunti Feldhahn: I get it.

Dr. James Dobson: That is good. Give me another example.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Well, you mentioned it in the lead-in, nagging. This is unfortunately something that guys, it just drives them up a tree and women don't understand why. And this is one of the things that I realized, again, I've unfortunately done too many times. Here's a common scenario where there's something around the house that needs to be done, and the husband has said he'll do it, he'll get to it. And the wife says, "When are you going to do that?" It becomes this nagging issue. Instead, what we women, and we women think that you guys are falling down on the job, and instead, what if we were to think, "I've asked him to do it, he hasn't done it, therefore there's a reason he hasn't done it and I'm going to trust him." As opposed to, "Well, clearly he's just not thinking." I mean, what does that do, what does that convey to a guy to have that constant drip, drip, drip?

Dr. James Dobson: He's either forgotten or he's too stupid to realize the importance of it. I mean, it does come across as disrespectful.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Well, and here's something that I quoted in the book because I thought it was such a great comment. I was sitting at a Starbucks with my friend and my book agent, Calvin Edwards, and he's been a huge help in this process of designing the survey questions, and we were just talking about this subject, and he ran into a pastor friend that he knew, and he was asking this question about nagging, "How is it that guys receive when they're asked to do something multiple times?" And the pastor said, "I'm irritated because I have to be reminded. I hate to be reminded." And my friend Calvin said, "Why is that a problem? Look, you have a day planner. You set up systems to remind yourself of things all the time." And the pastor said, "Inherent in her reminder is a statement of disappointment. For me as a man, that's saying that I failed. I hate to fail. It's not the statement that bothers me. It's the implications of it." And that is what we don't get.

Dr. James Dobson: Is there an element of insecurity in the man here that's causing him to react that way?

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah. Well, and that's one of the other subjects that I cover in the book, and this, frankly, this was such a surprise to me, is that we women think that you guys walk around all day with this... You walk around looking very confident in yourselves.

Dr. James Dobson: Bravado. Yeah.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah. And sometimes women, unfortunately, we get this idea, you need to be taken down a peg or two. And one of the guys I interviewed said, "No way. The male ego is the most fragile thing on the planet." And what's happening when you're ribbing your husband, maybe teasing him a little bit in public, what's

happening is that he's not starting above ground and you're bringing them down to ground level. What's happening is that he's starting below ground level and he's digging a tunnel somewhere and instead-

Dr. James Dobson: And it'll come back in the form of a reaction.

Shaunti Feldhahn: It will, it'll come back in the form of reaction and depression and feeling like he just can't do anything right. And one of the things that I was so surprised to find that most men really do go through their day with the secret feeling like, I really am not sure that I know what I'm doing and I hope nobody finds out. And instead, what they need is not the reinforcement of that insecurity. What they need is the affirmation, "Honey, you are doing a great job." And instead, because we don't recognize that, we don't realize that really we have a huge responsibility to spend a lot of effort really building up our man because he gets enough of those messages from the world.

Dr. James Dobson: The longer a man lives, I think the less that is a problem for him because especially if he has been successful, becomes a great physician, or he's good at whatever it is, mechanics or whatever it is, he comes to know he can do that. But starting out, particularly when many conflicts occur between a husband and wife, I think you're really on a sensitive nerve there.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Well, and interestingly enough, one of the things that I found was as many of us women, we might say, "Okay, maybe he's insecure, but it's primarily just a work thing." And in fact, one of the things I found was from guys is, one guy said, "It doesn't just stop when I walk through the door at home after work." He said, "At least at work, I've got some idea whether I'm doing a good job. I'm getting promotions or raises of the boss is happy. How do I know at home whether I'm being a good husband? The only measurement is the happiness of my wife." And so you can see how a guy who is secretly really not sure if he knows what he's doing as a husband and father, you can see how he would respond if his wife seemed constantly critical, or, "Why did you stay so late at work again, honey?" Or, "Don't you care about me and the kids?" And the guy just gets a sense of, "I have no idea what I'm doing and I can't do anything right."

Dr. James Dobson: The title of the book is *For Women Only: What You Need To Know About The Inner Lives of Men*, and we're just getting started, Shaunti. Will you be with us again because we want to pick up right here?

Shaunti Feldhahn: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: And you have much more to tell us, including quite a bit about sex and what you found in the survey of 800 men. And so there's a lot that we need to deal with. Going to just pick up right here next time. Shaunti, I really am impressed with what you've done here.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Thank you. I appreciate it.



Dr. James Dobson: It's an easy read. It is to the point, and I think you have expressed it in such a way that both men and women can't accept it. I asked you if women were irritated by this. You've been very gentle in the way you have handled this, and this is a good book and it's one that I really want to see soar because it will be helpful to husbands and wives everywhere.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Thank you, Dr. Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: We'll pick it up next time.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: Okay.

Roger Marsh: Want helpful reminders in today's conversation, and perhaps you even learned something new as well. You've been listening to Shaunti Feldhahn and her conversation with Dr. James Dobson here on Family Talk. Be sure to tune in again on Thursday and then again on Friday for the remaining two parts of this conversation. Now, if you missed any part of the interview we just aired, simply visit [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). Once you're there, you'll find a link for the book entitled *For Women Only: What You Need to Know about the Inner Lives of Men*, written by our guest today, Shaunti Feldhahn. Again, that's [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). As Christians, we know that God will often allow tests of our faith. He will allow us to experience pain and frustration, and we may never fully understand the tragic circumstances that He allows this side of heaven. Therefore, it is important for us to lean into our faith, especially during these challenging times.

And here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we want to walk alongside you if you're going through something like that right now. Our 10-day email series called *When God Doesn't Make Sense*, is based on Dr. Dobson's book of that same title, and it offers you encouragement in written form. After you sign up, you'll receive messages that explore the depths of hardship and also examine its purposes. Now, our prayer is that after you spend a couple minutes a day reading the wisdom of Dr. Dobson on this subject, you'll find that your faith has been strengthened, and you'll discover that you can learn some of life's greatest lessons in the darkest of valleys. Now, to sign up, it's easy to do, doesn't cost anything, just go to [drjamesdobson.org/when-god-doesnt-make-sense-series](http://drjamesdobson.org/when-god-doesnt-make-sense-series). And remember, there's no apostrophe necessary in the word doesn't. Again, that's [drjamesdobson.org/when-god-doesnt-make-sense-series](http://drjamesdobson.org/when-god-doesnt-make-sense-series).

And keep in mind, you can also reserve a copy of Dr. Dobson's book featuring that same title. All you have to do is go to [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk) for all the information. Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and you've been listening to Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love. Be sure to join us again next time when Doctor continues his conversation with author and researcher Shaunti Feldhahn right here on Family Talk.

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