



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Miscarriage: Grieving the Loss -Part 1

**Guest(s):** Dr. Walt and Barbara Larimore, Russ and June Gordon

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

**Roger Marsh:** Hello everyone, and welcome to another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh and as you may know, Family Talk is the listener supported radio division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Thanks for listening today. Thanks for sharing the show with your friends and thanks for taking us with you wherever you go throughout your day. Now, on this special episode of Family Talk, we're going to discuss a rather somber topic, and that is the topic of miscarriage. Losing a baby is one of the most difficult things a woman could ever imagine or experience and our guests today are all too familiar with this painful loss and the journey of grief that ensues.

Dr. Dobson has invited two couples to join him in addressing this difficult topic, Dr. Walt Larimore and his wife, Barbara, and Russ and June Gordon. Between these couples, they have experienced the devastating loss of six babies to miscarriage. But we know that the Larimore's and the Gordon's are not isolated cases. About 10 to 15% of all known pregnancies end in miscarriage. Today, in this classic conversation, Dr. Dobson will sit down with the Larimore's and Gordon's to talk about how they dealt with and how they continue to deal with the grief of losing their children before they were even born. Let's begin the first of this two-part program right now.

**Dr. James Dobson:** Well, thank you for being here. I'm going to start with an overview question. As you look back on those six miscarriages between the two of you, what emotions jump out at you? What, more than anything else, stands before you, as you think about the loss, the tragic loss of those little babies that you will have to wait to meet in heaven?

**Barbara Larimore:** For me, it was an overwhelming feeling of despair. I could not do one thing to help myself, to help this baby be born.

**Dr. James Dobson:** You're referring to the first one, or all four?

Barbara Larimore: All four. And as I had one and then another, and then two more after that, I know that I got really, really depressed and it was just hard to get out of bed sometimes. It was also very frustrating because I could not receive any answers to why. We had already had two children and the miscarriages came after Scott.

Dr. James Dobson: As a real shock.

Barbara Larimore: And it was a real shock because I was healthy and I just thought we were going to have a big family.

Dr. James Dobson: Having lost three babies to miscarriages, when you became pregnant again, Barb, how did that affect you emotionally, as you thought about the possibility of being hurt again?

Barbara Larimore: I think I lived on the edge of not even wanting to believe that I could carry this baby to term. It was hard to hope and every day it was a struggle to, as I said, get out of bed and to do the normal routine things that needed to be done to care for my family. It was a struggle every single day.

Dr. James Dobson: June, I ask you the same question. What kind of feelings and thoughts do you have today? First of all, how long has it been since you lost the second baby?

June Gordon: About eight years.

Dr. James Dobson: Eight years. Well, what feelings do you have now, eight years, almost a decade later?

June Gordon: I think that because of the children that we do have, and the circumstances that surrounded their births, I don't have a lot of grief over the second one because it was such a miracle that I got pregnant, we felt. And so, I didn't suffer as much through that pregnancy. I was four weeks along and within five days I found out I was pregnant, lost the baby, had the pregnancy confirmed and then had it unconfirmed all within about five days. So, I also didn't have time to really emotionally attach to that baby, where I did with my first one.

So, I'd really had just found out I was pregnant and a couple of days later lost it. So, it was very different from how we reacted to our first loss. But our first son was three months premature. And we went through infertility with him and all the circumstances surrounding his birth was just so miraculous. And the fact that he survived and has no problems. And to be able to look at Christopher and see the miracle of his life, it really overshadowed everything else. Then we conceived twins and then our last baby was born with Down syndrome. And so we had another experience with him. So, though we've been through some things, we've brought our babies home and that really helped us through a lot of the grief.

Dr. James Dobson: And yet, there's still tears in your voice as you talk about that.

June Gordon: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Walt, there's really no way to put into words what this experience does to a couple, is there? And especially to the mother, but also to the father. I have never, ever been as vulnerable, emotionally, in my life as I was the night my daughter was born. I mean, I know my heart was on my sleeve and I'm sure you have felt that way too.

Dr. Walt Larimore: I remember holding little Kate in my arms and by that time in my career, I had delivered several hundred babies and objectively, she was the prettiest baby I'd ever seen. I'm sure. But miscarriage, Jim, it's intensely sad. It's horribly frightening. And so few folks talk about what it does to the dad. And so few dads talk. I mean, Russ, it's like, I don't know how it was for you, but for me it was like guys expected you to be strong-

Russ Gordon: Exactly.

Dr. Walt Larimore: ... and brave, and there's no permission to hurt, to feel empty and to cry.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that right, Russ? Did you feel that people minimized the experience of this loss?

Russ Gordon: Yeah. What I found was that the calls and the letters and the cards that came in were directed at June. And of course I was experiencing my own kind of grief. At first, I think I was a little indifferent to it because I didn't quite understand what she was going through. And it took me some time after watching her grief and going to the Lord and saying, "What does this really mean?" To see that I had experienced that same loss. And there's a neat story about how through the process of one of our miscarriages, God gave me a name for that baby. What was actually very early on, and then this little sticky note kept going all over the house. And June finally asked me what it was, several weeks after the miscarriage had occurred, and I finally told her that that was the name for the baby.

Dr. James Dobson: Russ, that's an important point, that men typically experience the loss of a child in a miscarriage in a different way than women do. But the discomfort is there, nonetheless, and it often does come later for them. Walt, I mentioned a minute ago about people minimizing the pain and the empty arms that are associated with miscarriage. I have written down here, several comments that people often make to a mother who's lost a baby, including, "Don't worry, you can try again," or, "You have another child at home already." That's like saying to the mother of a teen who's killed in a car accident, "I know that you've lost your son or daughter, but at least you have another child at home." That would not help at all. In fact, that would hurt. I do hope that no one would ever say something like that and yet it does happen. When a mother who's been through a miscarriage is grieving her loss, what do we do? We go tell her to get over it in essence, "Get over it." That is a very hurtful thing to say.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Some things we were told, "Barb, this is probably a blessing. That baby was probably just deformed." What a horrible thing to say. "I imagine how you feel." Well, if you haven't... Three of our babies, we felt them kick and we felt them move. And then they were gone. And I mean, I take care of moms. I had no idea what it felt like. I had no idea. And I know-

Dr. James Dobson: And yet, you had witnessed it.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Absolutely. I know I don't know what Barb felt. I know that we thought, "Well, the second one will be easier than the first one because we've gone through it." It was exponentially harder. The third one was exponentially harder than that. And the fourth one, it was just devastating.

Dr. James Dobson: How long did it take you to get over it?

Dr. Walt Larimore: It's been 14 years and I'm not sure that we are.

Dr. James Dobson: Barb, have you gotten over it?

Barbara Larimore: I'm not sure either. I still remember each one as if it were yesterday, but I have to choose to think differently. I have to choose not to go there or else I could really spend my time crying an awful lot, but I do thank the Lord for those experiences. I never thought I would be able to say that, but I do know of many, many women that I've been able to comfort and to assure them that maybe one day, not in the too distant future, that they will be able to smile and laugh again and look at a newborn baby and see the joy that that new little life brings, instead of grieving and being envious and jealous.

Dr. James Dobson: June and Russ, that is why, in fact, you have started a ministry to reach out to those who are experiencing some of what you went through, isn't it?

Russ Gordon: Right, and I think the biggest thing we're doing is we're saying, "We're acknowledging you had a loss. Your baby had value, incredible worth." And we just want to say, "Honor that life in some way. Find a way to honor that life. Go through the grieving process. Get healing, find healing through this process." It's so important, otherwise you tend to get stuck and you don't move forward as a person, emotionally and spiritually.

Dr. James Dobson: And how do you reach out to those who are there?

Russ Gordon: We have created a little photo journal album that enables parents to journal their thoughts and their feelings. It walks them through that process, and we have wonderful testimonies of how it's allowed a mom to put the baby someplace to memorialize that baby. And we found it's brought a lot of healing, is one of the ways.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Russ, I wish you and June-

Barbara Larimore: I do, too.

Dr. Walt Larimore: ... would have been there when we were there. We didn't know to name those babies. We did not know that we could ask for them, to bury them. We did not know that we could honor them. And it was only when our kids were six, seven, eight, that we started going back and celebrating those death days. But we called them birthdays. And we were able to, as a family, look forward to the day that we'll see those kids. But Russ, without ministries like yours, many of our listeners may be surprised to learn that 70% of couples who have two miscarriages or more, divorce. And I think a lot of that is because of what you're saying, that no one or so few people value that loss. They tell us to get over it, to suck it up, to move on. And you can't. It took years.

Dr. James Dobson: Months at the minimum.

Dr. Walt Larimore: And years for us...

Dr. James Dobson: Barb, did anybody reach out to you in a proper manner and say the right things? Did anybody put an arm around you and show that they were hurting with you and comprehend it even in the small way, what you were going through?

Barbara Larimore: Not really. I did have many, many friends who were able to help out, who brought food, who kept the children, who would go on walks with me, who would talk with me, but it was not really conversation that got to the heart of the matter. And even at one point, I had one friend after a few months who came up to me and said, "Well, are you through with it yet?" And I said, "What are you talking about?" "Well, you know, this miscarriage thing." And so, just right there on the spot, I had to choose to forgive her and to go on and just to graciously answer her, "No, there will always be a soft spot in my heart for that baby."

Dr. James Dobson: Put into words-

Barbara Larimore: That was hard to hear.

Dr. James Dobson: ... what you think she was thinking. How did she perceive this?

Barbara Larimore: I think she perceived that there is a time of grief that is very specific to the whole population and not specific to the individual or unique to the individual. And it did not recognize stages of grief, which I know that I went through.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Walt, what about healthcare professionals? How sensitive are they to this problem? They've seen it. They've seen the tears and I know you can't generalize, but what have you observed?

Dr. Walt Larimore: Jim, I think it's a truism in medicine that it is extremely hard to minister to another person's pain when you haven't walked their path. And so, I'm not sure

it's reasonable for our listeners to routinely depend upon their healthcare giver or their physician to provide that. And I don't think that most doctors, or most of our listeners realize that this grief is a very often a more prolonged grief than the loss of a spouse or the loss of a child or the loss of a parent. Someone you knew and you held and you loved. And the loss of that type of person is overwhelming. It's huge. But in general, it seems that the loss through miscarriage, the loss of a child very early in its life seems to have a deeper and a much more prolonged impact. Depression is much more likely in a woman who's had a miscarriage, than a woman who's had a baby.

Dr. James Dobson: I know that what you just said is true because I've read it and heard it and seen it. But most of our listeners will not have known that. That's new information, that the loss of a baby through miscarriage is as profound or more so than any other death. And if you understand that, then you know a little more about how you need to approach the person who's going through it. June, did anybody reach out to you?

June Gordon: Yes. I had a lot of support. People listened, they were there, they cried with me, they held me. But when I really started thinking back to what really happened, I don't think that's what happened. I perceived it as support, which was a good thing because I have a lot of friends who have told me horrible stories about the lack of support they received and the really sad things that people say when you're in that situation. And a lot of that's just ignorance, they don't know what to say, so they say something that they shouldn't, instead of just saying, "I love you. I'm here. I'm sorry."

I remember telling one friend, "Just cry with me. Just be here. You don't have to say anything." But it was minimized. At the beginning, it was okay to talk about it. But maybe after two or three months, it's kind of like, "Well, here we go again." And when you've gone through grief of any kind, I think one of the things you do is you repeat your story. You have to tell it over and over. It helps it to become real to you. I think one of the things we fear is losing the memory of that one that we loved. And with the baby that we didn't know.

Dr. James Dobson: June, that that is brilliant. Because again, we see that in the loss of a friend or father or mother or sister, brother, and a baby who's lost to miscarriage. My mother expressed some of what you're talking about now, when my father died, because she had this great need to continue talking about the man who had been the centerpiece of her life for 42 years. Suddenly he was gone. And a month later, all of her friends and everybody, in compassion, but they wanted her to get beyond it. And they didn't want her to go on talking about him. She needed to talk about him. I mean, he was her life and all of a sudden she can't mention him anymore because it's not appropriate to do so. And that's sort of what you're saying, isn't it?

Russ Gordon: Yeah, and I think one of the things we're doing in this ministry is to encourage parents that they do need to do this. I don't think they recognize when they're

going through it, how important it is to memorialize their feelings, to honor and to journal and to put down in some permanent form, the memory of that child.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you do it?

Russ Gordon: We didn't. We didn't have the understanding at the time.

Dr. James Dobson: What should you have done?

Russ Gordon: We should have stopped. We would have had a ceremony at the time. We would have journaled our thoughts and our feelings, because what happens, of course, over time, memories do fade. It's just part of who we are as people. And it's important while they're fresh to get them down in some way, to memorialize those feelings.

Dr. James Dobson: In what way? What do you recommend to those that you're trying to minister to?

Russ Gordon: Well again, we talk about journaling your feelings and your thoughts.

Dr. James Dobson: And then we talked about giving the name to the child and burying the child.

Russ Gordon: Right, there are some other great things that we know of other people have done. People plant trees in honor of their children, bulbs that come up around the time that the child was due.

June Gordon: Yeah, a friend of mine did, her baby was due in the spring, and so she planted bulbs so that in the spring time, when the bulbs came, that was a remembrance of her little baby.

Dr. James Dobson: June, tell us a little more about the ministry that you all have started and what you're trying to accomplish.

June Gordon: Two years ago, one of my customers came to me and she's an ICU nurse at Memorial Hospital here in town. And she said, "You know, we're trying to do something special for families who have lost a baby in the ICU. Do you have any ideas?" Well, as a mom who had two children in the NICU and who... we watched children not make it.

Dr. James Dobson: That stands for neonatal-

June Gordon: Neonatal intensive care unit. I forget. But having been through that experience and seeing families grieving the loss of a baby in the unit, it was very close to my heart. And I went to our pastor and said, "Do you think we could do something here?" And threw out my idea, and they just embraced it. And again, it's to honor and remember. I think that's kind of our key phrase. We want to honor and remember and celebrate their life.

Dr. James Dobson: It's a beautiful thing that you've done because what's really happening is that you have taken your pain and your experience, and instead of being angry at God and blaming God, you let him use this to minister to his other children. That's a beautiful thing. Russ, talk about the album that you all have put together for families that are going through this.

Russ Gordon: The album is designed in such a way that it's not just a blank album. It has little headings that help parents think about the kinds of things that will help them heal. We were talking earlier about the plans that we had for that child, the preparations we made, the dreams we had for those children. And so, one of those headers is Dreams We Had For You. It's important the parents go ahead and experience that and journal who could this baby have been? What might they have brought to our family?

Roger Marsh: I'm Roger Marsh, and you've just heard day one of Dr. Dobson's candid, emotional conversation with Walt and Barbara Larimore, and Russ and June Gordon, here on Family Talk. As our guests today expressed, after going through something as devastating as a miscarriage or multiple miscarriages, it can be hard to hope again. It can be hard to trust that God is really in control and that he has good things in store for us.

When I go through a difficult time, I've always found Psalm 34:18 to be of comfort. The psalmist writes, "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit." Grief is different for every person. If you've experienced the pain of a miscarriage or pregnancy loss, you know that there is no time limit on grief. And if you've never experienced a tremendous loss, but know someone who is currently grieving, this might be a good opportunity to be the hands and feet of Jesus to them. Reach out to your hurting friend. Tell them that you love them, and that you're praying for them. Offer to bring them a meal or ask if there's anything you can do to make the burden a little bit lighter.

One of God's designs for the body of Christ is that we are to be there for one another when hard times come. Now to learn more or to hear any part of the broadcast that you might've missed today, be sure to visit our broadcast page at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). That's [drjamesdobson.org/broadcast](http://drjamesdobson.org/broadcast). And of course, please call us anytime, day or night, and know that we are here to answer any questions you might have about the James Dobson Family Institute, or to recommend a resource for you, or to simply pray with you. Our toll free number is (877) 732-6825. That's (877) 732-6825. And remember, you can always write to us. We love to hear from you when you send us a letter. Our ministry mailing address is the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, PO Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado. The zip code 80949. And bear in mind that the mail is a great, safe way to send a tax deductible donation in support of Family Talk as well. Again, our ministry mailing address is the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, PO Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado. The zip code 80949.

Now, before we leave for the day, I want to tell you about a special series we've created for moms. After all, raising kids, maintaining a healthy marriage, finding



some sort of balance through it all, running a home, earning a paycheck, providing for your family. A mom's work truly, never ends. Unfortunately, though, we can't give you superpowers and we can't create more hours in the day, but we can offer you some time-tested truths and encouragements to help you be the best mom you can be. That's why we're inviting you to sign up now for the *Empowering Moms* series, created especially for moms. Each and every day, you'll receive practical parenting advice, packed with timeless scriptural truths and a prayer to renew and inspire you. Now to sign up, simply go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). It's that simple, [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). Thanks for listening to Family Talk today and be sure to join us again tomorrow for the second half of the interview, we've entitled *Miscarriage: Grieving the Loss*. It's coming up right here on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks for listening.

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

Dr. James Dobson You've probably heard about the tragic phenomenon known as sudden infant death syndrome or SIDS. It's still taking the lives of about 6,000 babies each year in the United States alone. This killer has mystified medical researchers but now a new study has been conducted by the US Consumer Product Safety Commission, in collaboration with researchers at the University of Maryland and Washington University- St. Louis. The epidemiologist who directed the investigation, Dr. N.J. Shear, said "We have not found a cause for SIDS but our results show that specific items of bedding used in the U.S., such as comforters and pillows, were associated with an increased risk for death to prone sleeping infants whose faces became covered."

This means that babies should not be placed on their stomachs in soft bedding. This will lessen the likelihood that they will rebreathe their own carbon dioxide that's trapped in the blankets and pillows around them." In about 30% of the 206 SIDS deaths in a research project, babies were found with bedding pressed against their noses and mouths. The advice now being offered by doctors is that parents place their infants on their backs, not on their stomachs and that a minimum amount of loose bedding be kept in the crib. Following this advice won't eliminate all case of SIDS, but it could save hundreds if not thousands of lives every year.

Roger Marsh: To find out how you can partner with Family Talk, go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org).