



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Women and Emotional Infidelity – Part 1

Guest(s): Julie Barnhill

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Roger Marsh: Hello everyone. Roger Marsh here for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. The news comes in all shapes, sizes, and formats these days, but how do you cut through all the noise and get to the heart of the matters that affect your family? Well, come to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and sign up for Dr. Dobson's monthly newsletter. You'll find clarity on tough issues, encouragement for daily life and trusted principles to help you build strong, healthy and connected families. Go to drjamesdobson.org and sign up today. That's drjamesdobson.org.

Dr. Dobson: Today, on Family Talk:

Julie Barnhill: I wasn't particularly sexually promiscuous. I didn't sleep around with a bunch of people and stuff like that, but emotionally I was so promiscuous. It's like I just handed my heart over to boys and they didn't even have to promise me anything.

Roger Marsh: Welcome to Family Talk with your host, psychologist and author, Dr. James Dobson. I'm Roger Marsh and the topic that we're going to be addressing today is quite honestly one that you just don't hear addressed in churches or in Christian circles very often, for that matter, but I've really been looking forward to it because I think it just might help save a marriage, possibly even your marriage. Our topic today is women and emotional adultery. Now we know this is a provocative subject because God made us all sexual creatures and yet we're only focusing on the particular problems of women in this area. Now by no means guys, are we letting you off the hook here. It's just that men and women are wired differently and therefore we have different vulnerabilities when it comes to adulteries and affairs.

As I'm sure you know, our goal here at Family Talk in sharing this broadcast today is not to point fingers. It's simply to help someone, maybe one of our listeners, avoid the pitfalls that can absolutely tear a family apart.

Now, our guest today on the program is Julie Barnhill. She's been on the Family Talk broadcast many times before and every time she is on we hear from so

many of you who share how much you relate to her honesty and her humor and her warmth. Well, today she brings that same style as she speaks very candidly but discretely about her own struggles with emotional infidelity. Julie has written 11 books. She's spoken before tens of thousands, and national and international audiences. Even scored a guest appearance on Oprah at one point, and juggled marriage and motherhood in the middle of all of that. Now she hosts a retreat getaway for women who need to unplug and recharge just a bit and we'll be sure to include a link to her website on our broadcast page so you can find out more about that.

Just a quick note before we begin, this program features our former cohost LuAnne Crane, so you'll hear from her throughout the program. Now let's jump in as Dr. Dobson welcomes Julie Barnhill to today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. Dobson: We welcome you back. I said I was going to read the titles of your books and I want to do this real quick, but it really is revealing. *She's Gonna Blow*. I love that one. It's really about dealing with a mother's anger and boy, that is useful and powerful stuff and you can still get that book in the-

Julie Barnhill: Absolutely, available.

Dr. Dobson: ... bookstores. Yeah, I bet you wouldn't mind if they did. *Scandalous Grace*, *Radical Forgiveness*, and *Exquisite Hope*. Those are three different books. *Motherhood: The Guilt That Keeps on Giving*. We did a program on that, didn't we?

Julie Barnhill: Yes, we did.

Dr. Dobson: *One Tough Mother*, and then four books that also seem to be linked, *Every Mother Can Keep Her Cool*. I doubt that, but it's true to some degree.

Julie Barnhill: Buy the book.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah. *Every Mother Needs a Good Laugh*. I'm glad of that. *Every Mother Can Beat the Blues*, and *Every Mother Can Let Go of Stress*. And then other books that we've talked about here and I imagine we'll have you back to-

Julie Barnhill: Lots of them in there, yes.

Dr. Dobson: ... discuss them. Yeah. Julie Barnhill has also been a guest on the Oprah Winfrey Show, CNN, NBC's *The Other Half*, and Janet Parshall. She's had articles printed in *Woman's Day* and she's very active on Facebook. You're a very busy mother. Aren't you?

Julie Barnhill: Yeah, I'm unapologetic Facebook person.

LuAnne Crane: Wow.

Julie Barnhill: I just love the relations that come out of there. I told my husband, I said, "I just had my own little counseling IM window." I'll go online and I have women from all over the world that'll be like, "Julie, you got a few minutes to talk?" And the subject we're going to talk about today has been a few conversations that we've had on that.

Dr. Dobson: Isn't it incredible? The methods now, the social networking-

Julie Barnhill: It is.

Dr. Dobson: ... that's possible through the [crosstalk 00:04:54].

Julie Barnhill: And you know, you can go to bad places with that and you can go to redemptive places with that. That's really what I'm trying to do.

Dr. Dobson: Well, let's get into the topic that we're going to talk about today. Actually, this is your topic. It's not one we assigned. Women and emotional adultery. Specifically, what has led you down that path to think about this issue as it relates not only to yourself but other women? There must be a source of that interest. It really comes out of your life, doesn't it?

Julie Barnhill: It really does. I've thought about this since LuAnne and I had talked about topics and I offered it. And it's not that I wanted to ever back track at all, but it really was like, "Okay, Julie. It's one thing to talk about motherhood and anger and another to talk about guilt or something, but this is really putting yourself out there." But I just know there are women out there listening who are in really bad situations with men. Maybe engaging with them one-on-one through conversation, but a lot of it sometime is just that mental place that we go to in relationships and what we wish we had and what we wish we didn't have. And so yeah, I'm very much sitting behind this microphone as a woman who has known what it is to swim in that water.

Dr. Dobson: Right. You told us before we went on the air that despite the fact that you've been on Oprah, you've done a lot of speaking, you're out there, you are more uneasy or nervous about the program today than any of the other things that we've done or that you typically do. This is not an easy one to talk about.

Julie Barnhill: It's not. Because I love my husband and I love my kids, but I know there's a vulnerability to this. And also just like, "Wow, you really went there?" I just feel that, whether anybody else thinks that or not. But I'll tell you what makes it worth it, is when I say it and when women come and speak to me and say, "I am so glad you said it." And even more when someone's like, "I would've never thought someone like you..." Meaning what? You talk behind a microphone, but we think that about one another. So, let's just do this and we know that God is just going to redeem it all.

Dr. Dobson: Well, this is an experience that there's not speak its name. People lie about this when they won't lie about anything or they'll conceal it even from a husband, even from those they're intimate with. So for you to be here, it says a lot, and we're going to be very discreet. We're not going to embarrass...

Julie Barnhill: I trust you guys...

Dr. Dobson: ... embarrass anybody here. Let's start with your high school years. I read that you brought baggage with you into adolescence.

Julie Barnhill: I did. My background, trying to summarize it really quick. I was adopted. I was four and a half years old when I was officially adopted into a family, grew up in a wonderful home, knew I was loved, but I can remember, I can even go back as far as fourth grade and remember wanting boys' attention, not girls, boys' attention and friendship. And then I can even think of sixth grade. I blossomed early and I remember just thinking it was cool that a boy noticed I had a bra strap. Isn't that weird? You'll be able to explain this to me why I did this Dr. Dobson. I'll appreciate that.

Dr. Dobson: It's the happy hormones, even before they came [crosstalk 00:08:36].

Julie Barnhill: It was but you know, I look back and there was almost like... I use the word allurement. There was something in me that wanted to be able to allure boys or-

Dr. Dobson: You know what that, allure is affirmation. It is feeling affirmed and valued when the opposite sex says you're interesting.

Julie Barnhill: But is every girl at that age like that? Because when I look back, I'm just like, that was just... It seemed abnormally early and... I don't know. But I know that was part of it.

And going into junior high, I can remember a skirt that my mom bought me that had a slit. Do you remember when you had slitted skirts?

LuAnne Crane: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Julie Barnhill: That was probably eighth grade or freshman, perhaps. But I remember being very aware of the shape of my legs and-

Dr. Dobson: And that boys were watching.

Julie Barnhill: ... and that boys were watching. I liked that and was disappointed if someone... I noticed if someone didn't look. That was early on and I didn't have any boyfriends or anything like that, but all of that was just kind of the soil.

Dr. Dobson: LuAnne, do you remember when we did a program on the fair sex?

LuAnne Crane: Yes.

Dr. Dobson: Coming out of my book, *Bringing Up Girls*, and I quoted Stasi Eldredge writing about girls wanting the answer to one major question, "Am I lovely? Does anybody care? Does anybody want to see me? Does anybody see me? Am I valuable to anybody?" And especially as a little girl, she wanted to be valuable to her father.

Now, when you were in foster care, your father was a mystery.

Julie Barnhill: Right.

Dr. Dobson: And you had a father figure in the foster care dad, right?

Julie Barnhill: Yeah, he became my grandpa, which was interesting, but he was real quiet, real quiet man. So he's not a real impact in my memory and stuff that I can remember. I had a very loving father, fished with my dad and hunted with my dad, and he taught me how to skeet shoot and all sorts of stuff. So there's a part of me that's, I think there's just a brokenness there, whether it's just the spiritual dynamic of who we are as humans as part of it. And then I don't know, sometimes I almost feel like I had a target that I was particularly broken in that area.

Dr. Dobson: Well, then you came into puberty and adolescence and those feelings continued.

Julie Barnhill: Oh, very much so.

Dr. Dobson: Tell us the story.

Julie Barnhill: Well, I can remember my freshman year, there was a cute boy from Keytesville, Missouri and we weren't supposed to like boys from Keytesville, but he was cute. I can remember this, he was sitting, playing basketball and he had a timeout or something and he'd kind of look at me, that play you do, flirtatious, you lift your eyes and drop your eyes. And boy, I just was thrilled that he liked me. That was like my first boyfriend and it bothers me. I think about this now, it just bothers me and this is how I've used it sometimes. That I wasn't particularly sexually promiscuous, I didn't sleep around with a bunch of people and stuff like that, but emotionally I was so promiscuous. It's like I just handed my heart over to boys and they didn't even have to promise me anything.

I never had anyone's class ring, no one offered their class ring to me. I never got to wear that on my finger or wrapped around my neck. It astounds me as a 44-year-old woman looking back at that young girl and very much still wanted that attention and physically and if... Messing around physically was part of it. Well, that was part of it and I had lots of guilt about it. Lots of guilt, and would swear not to-do things and then would kind of find myself back in that rut of behavior.

Dr. Dobson: Looking back on it, the seeds of emotional promiscuousness as an adult were planted at that time?

Julie Barnhill: Absolutely, planted at that time. Not to jump ahead too much, but I can remember a specific counselor I went to in my 30s and he had a sheet that he had you fill out before you came. I was actually at the early stages of this emotional adultery, and I saw where I was going and it bothered me. And yet I just felt like I could not not go there and I wrote everything down. When I walked into the office, I sat down and he took out my sheet and reviewed it and he went, "Where do you want to begin?" He said during our counseling session, "Julie, given your past and given your history, it's amazing that you've remained sexually faithful in your marriage." I wept. It was affirming and then also knowing where I was in my mind and my frustration in my marriage...

Dr. Dobson: He was acknowledging that there was a need within you that had not been satisfied.

Julie Barnhill: Right.

Dr. Dobson: And yet it was very much there even though you were happily married.

Julie Barnhill: I asked Jesus to come into my heart and be my savior when I was a nine-year-old girl and I've run hard after Him. Like I said, I had a lot of guilt because I'd go to church, I wanted to do what's right and I knew what was right and wrong. Went to a Christian college, thought I wanted to go into religious education, had a professor that's like, "No, all you'll do is teach Sunday school and you're more than a Sunday school teacher." Had a man speak into my life, a professor.

I mean, I've longed for holiness and I married a man that I loved. Physicality there, very much. That attraction with him. And then just found myself at a place in my marriage where... But it actually, it took root before then even.

Dr. Dobson, my thing was to go somewhere and it'd be like, "Okay, find the cute guy, tall, dark, handsome. That's kind of my mode modus." And the game was to get his attention, to flirt, to do that thing and to get him to like me. And then as soon as he liked me, game over. Next.

Dr. Dobson: I know that game well.

Julie Barnhill: There's a healthy part of that I guess, but I think I took it a little too far. And so, to get married and stay with one person, wow, that's, I really had a lot of faith.

Dr. Dobson: Now, it takes two to tango and there are always two sides to every relationship problem. And you're not prepared to dump on your husband here and blame him for everything, but he has a component in it. He was not attentive to you at a particular time. Is that right?

Julie Barnhill: It's partly right, but it's also - it'd be interesting if you could observe our marriage or something like that. I'm a bulldozer and it's so interesting, I've heard this and you roll your eyes in marriage counseling and all that stuff. But the things that attracted you in dating, in courtship, in early marriage are the things that just-

LuAnne Crane: Drive you nuts.

Julie Barnhill: ... drive you crazy and then beyond that can just make you hard and just check out and that's Rick and I.

Dr. Dobson: In other words, he was the strong, silent type and that was-

Julie Barnhill: How did you know?

Dr. Dobson: You were drawn to him and then afterward he wouldn't talk to you.

Julie Barnhill: Yes. He was fascinated by what I had to say-

Dr. Dobson: How do I know?

Julie Barnhill: ... and I loved that. This is an aspect of the marriage that I think it'd be interesting to hear from you too, is that I'd say about year 16 or 17 of our marriage... We've been married 23, so it'd be earlier than that, 12 years. I said to Rick one time, I said, "Rick, I'm not the same woman you married." I said, "I wanted to be in control when we got married." I mean, he was happy to let me make decisions and do stuff and I took care of the bills. I did this and I didn't want him doing it, and then there was just shifts over time. "I want you to do that more. Well, for 12 years it's been like this and now I'm not happy, I'm not satisfied." Happy is not really the word, it's just satisfied.

And so I don't hear people address that much in marriage books or marriage counseling. That we do change. I mean, our characters are the same, our temperament remains largely the same, but that I didn't want him to just talk about me anymore, believe it or not. I said, "Let's talk about you Rick, and what do you want to do and what are your interests?" That was a shift for him. He didn't really know what to do with that.

Dr. Dobson: Let me get myself into real trouble. Okay?

Julie Barnhill: Please do.

Dr. Dobson: Here's a phrase that is often true, "A woman wants a man she can look up to, who won't look down on her. And so if a man is strong, the relationship is often strong. And if a man defers to her to a degree, there can be a contempt or something missing in that relationship."-

Julie Barnhill: I think contempt's a good word. That's actually a word that the Holy Spirit really brought out in my life probably about six years ago when I was really asking some questions about my heart towards my husband and marriage in general. And that was kind of what I got. It was just, "Julie, you just have a contempt for him." When he does step up and when he does do that, then I'm, "Well, you didn't do it right. You didn't do it the way I think you should do it."

Dr. Dobson: Yet it's what you wanted and what you grabbed for.

Julie Barnhill: Yeah, and I don't want to sound stereotypical in that, but I do and I think it does, as a Christian, it does go back to the garden. I think it is part of that curse where God says to the woman, "Your desire will be for him and you're not going to like it." Can you?

LuAnne Crane: Oh, I can. In fact, Dr. Dobson was going to ask you about that Scripture in Genesis and your take on that. Because we have this tension that Julie's describing where we want our husbands to lead but then get out of the way because I want to and I'm thinking it goes back to the garden.

Dr. Dobson: It's there. I mean, it's amazing to me that in those very early Scriptures that the Lord gave for us, he was outlining the nature between men and women. And that is so offensive to women and to men too, sometimes, because it's politically incorrect, but it is still true. I mentioned earlier that male and female sexuality is very, very different, and affairs that occur take a different character. For men, they are largely physical in nature. It's King David looking out the window and seeing Bathsheba. There's no indication that he knew her, that he had a relationship with her, that he had an emotional connection with her. He saw her and desired her and wanted her and took her and killed her husband in order to get her. Affairs and adultery for a man don't often go to murder. Sometimes they do, but that is rather typical of a man's sexuality.

If you think of Matthew 5, where Jesus is talking and he said, "He that looketh on the body of a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her in his heart already." He didn't even have to do it. He didn't even have to carry through with it. The adultery comes from the willingness of the heart to defy God. That's how I define lust.

For a woman, it is much more emotional in nature, and Jesus didn't say, "She that looketh on the body of a man to lust hath committed adultery." It's all masculine. That whole thing is written from a masculine point of view. If he had talked about women, he would have talked about your subject today. He would have talked about-

Julie Barnhill: Heart, mind.

Dr. Dobson: ... really sinking into this fantasy life. This need for emotional connection, this desire for love, this desire for affirmation that leads you to do wrong things. You

put those two together and you've got adultery is what you have. You stopped short of it, but that's what you're talking about. That form of feminine lust, if you will.

Julie Barnhill: And that's the word that I wanted to use. I wanted to use adultery. It's almost like when I spoke about my anger with my children, I use the word abuse. I said I've abused my kids. I've improper excessive treatment with them physically and I got a lot of flak from that for some people. And with this subject, it's like this isn't an affair, this was adultery. This is me giving to someone: emotions and thoughts and dreams-

Dr. Dobson: That belong to your husband.

Julie Barnhill: ... that belong to my husband. And before that happened, I had it in my heart, in my mind, with a person unnamed. I mean, literally there was no man per se, but I was in that land, and that's something I'll talk to women about. I'll be like, one of the most difficult things for me in my life and perhaps it has to do with adoption and different things like that, but it's to live present, to be present. I mean, in my life I've had a hard time not... Maybe my life would be this way if that happened or-

Dr. Dobson: Well, Julie, you've been very open and vulnerable with us today and we appreciate that, but we are running out of time and there's just so much more to your story that I like to share with our listeners. Would you stay and be with us again tomorrow?

Julie Barnhill: Well, I'm not leaving. I'm just going to stay right here.

LuAnne Crane: All right. That sounds good.

Julie Barnhill: Absolutely.

LuAnne Crane: Thanks Julie.

Dr. Dobson: Blessings to you.

Roger Marsh: As you heard, we're going to pick it up right here tomorrow with Julie Barnhill here on Family Talk. She will share more about her struggle with emotional infidelity and also offer some tips for helping women guard against this potential pitfall in their marriages. In the meantime, if you would like to learn more about Julie, her books or her ministry, or if you want to hear this program again, go to drjamesdobson.org or give us a call at 1(877) 732-6825. Again, the number (877) 732-6825.

In addition, a lot of the themes we've touched on here are also represented in Dr. Dobson's book, Love Must Be Tough. Now, the main topic of that book is a little bit different from what we talked about today, but it does offer useful

advice for anyone who has discovered that their spouse is having an affair or if they see themselves drifting into one, especially an emotional affair. One of the chapters, for example, is titled “The Anatomy of Adultery” and it outlines the steps most women take on the road to an affair. That information could be a powerful tool for avoiding years and years of pain. And you can get a copy at drjamesdobson.org, or just give us a call at 1(877) 732-6825.

We offer these resources because we really hope that they will help save a marriage. And if you're able, would you please help us in this mission to save marriages? Your donation of any amount would help us strengthen families all over the world. So remember, you can donate online at drjamesdobson.org, or call us. The number again is (877) 732-6825 and we thank you for every gift and every prayer that comes our way. I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks for joining us today and be sure to tune it again tomorrow for the rest of the conversation with Julie Barnhill.

Julie Barnhill: I had checked out emotionally in my marriage. I was tired of having conversations with my husband. I was tired of not getting the response that I wanted. Was it what I should hear? I don't know, but it's sure what I wanted to hear and wanted to talk about, so I just shut myself off emotionally from him.

Roger Marsh: That's next time on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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

Dr. Tim Clinton: This is Dr. Tim Clinton, Executive Director of the James Dobson Family Institute. Thanks for listening today. We hope you found this program helpful and encouraging. Please remember that our ministry is here to serve you and your family. For more information about our programs and resources or to learn how you can support us, go to drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org, or call us toll free, (877) 732-6825. I pray that God will bless you in 2020.

And as we start the new year, we're so grateful for your partnership. We ask you to stand with us and to continue to defend the Christian values in an ever changing culture. Thanks again for joining us. We hope you'll join us again on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.