



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** A Story of Cancer and Comfort – Part 1

**Guest(s):** Dr. David Jeremiah

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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:** It's been said that everyone is either coming out of a painful situation, currently in one, or about to experience one. Well, if that is in fact true, how should a Christian respond when inevitable hardship and suffering comes our way? This is Family Talk, the broadcast ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh and these radio programs are supported by just like you. Today we are re-airing one of Dr. Dobson's most popular conversations from our archives featuring author and pastor, Dr. David Jeremiah.

In the early 1990s, Dr. Jeremiah was diagnosed with cancer. In a moment, he will recount that journey and the role that his faith played during that challenging time. But before we listen to Dr. Jeremiah's testimony, I want to share with you some important statistics that will provide context and maybe help you in your health journey as well. According to the National Cancer Institute, last year, an estimated 1.8 million new cases of cancer were diagnosed in the U.S., with over 600,000 people succumbing to the disease. The most common cancers are breast cancer, lung and bronchus cancer, prostate cancer, colon and rectum cancer, and melanoma of the skin. But there is good news. As of January 2019, there were an estimated 16.9 million cancer survivors in the United States, and that number of survivors is projected to increase to 22.2 million by the year 2030.

Things to keep in mind, to take care of yourself and your loved ones. Now let me remind you briefly about our guest, Dr. David Jeremiah and his background. Dr. David Jeremiah is the founder and host of Turning Point Radio and Television Ministries and the Senior Pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church in San Diego, California. Dr. Jeremiah received his undergraduate and doctor of divinity from Cedarville University and holds a master's in theology from Dallas Theological Seminary. He has authored several bestselling books, including *Captured by Grace*, *Hopeful Parenting*, and *When Your World Falls Apart*. Dr. Jeremiah and his wife, Donna, have four grown children and 12 grandchildren. Here now is Dr. James Dobson to further introduce his friend on this edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: We are indeed honored to have an old friend back with us in the studio today. He's been our guest on numerous occasions. He's Dr. David Jeremiah. He's been the Senior Pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church in El Cajon, California. He's been in that responsibility for many, many years, and now he has a book out that we want to talk about called *When Your World Falls Apart: Seeing Past the Pain of the Present*. Our pastor said a couple of years ago that there are two kinds of people in the world, those who are in pain, and those who will be in pain. And so we want to talk about those occasions when life gets tough.

So, Dr. Jeremiah, you and I have been friends for a long time. I think we met at Black Hawk Baptist Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and I had come there to speak, I think it was 1975. So we have had a friendship that goes back a long way. You are reaching so many people now, in addition to Shadow Mountain Church, of course, where you are the senior pastor. You have your own radio ministry, you also have a television ministry. How many stations are you on now?

Dr. David Jeremiah: You know how we quantify these stations. It depends on what list you look at. We have about 600 originating stations in about 1400 outlets. And just before I came here, one of the guys on my staff told me that we're released 1,840 times, and that's because of multiple releases during the day.

Dr. James Dobson: And the title of the ministry is-

Dr. David Jeremiah: Turning Point.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Would you have believed in the beginning that the Lord would use you in the way that He is?

Dr. David Jeremiah: I had no way of ever knowing that. One of the things that's so interesting to me, Dr. Dobson, is when I was called to the ministry, I was preparing for a career in radio. And when I went to say yes to the Lord that I would be a pastor, the one thing that made me feel bad was I was walking away from this radio thing I had done. And then the Lord just restored it to me a hundred fold and I can't thank Him enough.

Dr. James Dobson: Let me bait you just a little bit. When the Lord puts His hand upon you and when He blesses what you're doing beyond your wildest imagination, and people are interested in what you have to say, and are obviously being blessed by what you have to say, then you don't have a lot of personal difficulties in your life because the Lord just sort of takes care of all that so you won't be distracted.

Dr. David Jeremiah: You know what, you baited me well, because it's almost the exact opposite. I can't remember a time when things were going better in terms of ministry and the church on the radio. I often made a joke that I'd been writing books for

years, but all of a sudden people was started reading some of them. And during that particular time, right at the zenith of all that is when I was hit with cancer.

Dr. James Dobson: That was 1994.

Dr. David Jeremiah: That's correct.

Dr. James Dobson: You went in for a routine executive exam, didn't have any symptoms. There was nothing that led you to seek medical care?

Dr. David Jeremiah: In fact, I was clear at the end of the day. This was one of those deals where you would go in and get the test and at the end of the day, they would kind of read it out for you. And they were going over my test and they said, we just want to do one more thing. We want to examine you. And they laid me on the table and the doctor did a digital exam. And he felt something in my abdominal cavity. And he said, you got something wrong here. He said, there's something here that shouldn't be here. He said, it feels like an enlarged spleen. So he sent me to the radiology department. And at the time my wife was gone, I was home alone. I had to wait until the next day. And when I called the next day, they told me that I had a mass in the mesentery, which is in that area and that they assumed it was lymphoma, but they would have to do a biopsy to find out.

Dr. James Dobson: David did it scary to death? How'd you react to that?

Dr. David Jeremiah: I remember a few things about that particular time. I've never in my life, had a hard time sleeping. I can sleep anywhere in any situation, but that night I stayed awake all night long and I just looked at the ceiling and I didn't know what to think. I didn't want to call my wife because I didn't want her to worry about it.

Dr. James Dobson: Donna was gone.

Dr. David Jeremiah: She was gone. I was going to meet her in New Hampshire at a radio rally. She was with her parents. And I didn't want to say anything to her. I didn't want to tell any of my staff. I didn't want to tell my children. So I don't know, I don't think I've ever felt so isolated and as alone as I did that night. I'll never forget that.

Dr. James Dobson: Were you afraid?

Dr. David Jeremiah: Oh, absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: I appreciate you're admitting that.

Dr. David Jeremiah: Yeah. I don't think I've ever been afraid of dying, but I was afraid for my, my family. I was afraid for my children. I was afraid because I didn't know what this disease was all about. And just recalling it, brings the emotion to the surface almost.

Dr. James Dobson: The only Scripture from the Apostle Paul that I cannot identify with, at least not until this time and to some degree, not now, has been "To live is Christ and to die is gain." And the reason I couldn't is because my job wasn't done.

Dr. David Jeremiah: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: I've got those two kids and I have a wife who is dependent on me who are very, very close. And I couldn't say, it makes no difference, whatever the Lord wants. I mean, of course what He wants is what I want, but I couldn't do it dispassionately because of the responsibility to my family.

Dr. David Jeremiah: Exactly. And that's what I was struggling with more than anything else.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, the next day, I guess, you got the diagnosis and you called Donna.

Dr. David Jeremiah: Actually, I didn't call Donna. I knew I was going to meet her in New Hampshire, so I decided would just wait. I got to the rally. I got there late. She'd already set up the books and she was working at the book table. I walked through the lobby and I just kissed her on the way to the pulpit. And I went that night and I preached, and we had an incredible service. I'll never forget that night. And when it was over and we shook hands with people and went back to this hotel. And after we'd gotten in the hotel room and shut the door, I sat on the bed and I said, honey, I got something I got to tell you. And I don't think either one of us slept much that night.

Dr. James Dobson: How did she react?

Dr. David Jeremiah: She just hugged me and told me how much she loved me and said, we're going to get through this. I just know it, we're going through this together. And we had another rally the next night in Bar Harbor. And we had to drive all day up to that place. The Lord gave such incredible, those two nights that I preached, I almost felt like somebody else was preaching and I was standing outside watching because it didn't seem like it was me. And we got through that and came home. And the next thing I knew, we were on our way to the Mayo Clinic. And I had a surgery called a laparotomy where they, I always say, they cut you open like a fish. They did a final diagnosis then and told me what I had.

Dr. James Dobson: Now for many years, as a pastor, you have ministered to your church congregation and your friends who are going through something like this. I mean, you had watched it from the outside.

Dr. David Jeremiah: And I prayed with people and stood with them in the midst of it.

Dr. James Dobson: It's a different thing when it's you.

Dr. David Jeremiah: Yeah. But you know something, if for no other reason, it's worth it to know, like I've said to my friends on the staff, all the stuff I've been preaching all these

years, it's true. It's really true. God is enough. He is sufficient and it doesn't take away our human emotion, but it strengthens you in the midst of it and helps you get through it. And you get insight you could never get. I remember thinking of many of the passages that I had taught. And in fact, this book that came out of all of this was born out of some of those passages in the Book of Psalms. And those Psalms just came alive to me in a way that I couldn't explain it any other time.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I can identify with you. I've never had cancer, as far as I know, but I've had a stroke and a heart attack, and I've looked death straight in the face as a man who thought of himself as Joe College and bulletproof and invincible, and it really does get your attention and you find out at a time like that, what you're made out of.

Dr. David Jeremiah: And you find out what the people who are around you are made out of. You know Donna, because you met her when you were back there with us. And she's such a quiet, sensitive person. She doesn't let like to be in the limelight, but she's a very strong person. And one time when I was going through testing, Dr. Dobson, the Scripps Clinic, they had to do a biopsy of my spleen and they do that by inserting a long needle in your back. They put you in and out of the scanner so they can see where it's going. And then they extract the tissue and we were waiting outside to go in for that test. And I said something like, I think we should pray, but I don't think I can do it. I don't think I'll get through it. And she said, I can pray.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, man.

Dr. David Jeremiah: And she prayed. And I mean, it was a strong prayer. And I found out the depth of strength of that woman in a way that I knew, but not at that level. And she wrote a little forward to this book. When I read it, I thought it was so great. She said, in the midst of all of this, you have to make choices, and I chose hope. And that's the kind of thing that happens, I think, when you go through an experience like this. You find out a lot about yourself. You certainly find out a lot about God, but you sure do find out a lot about the people that are close to you.

Dr. James Dobson: I experienced the same thing. I couldn't pray for myself on either of those occasions.

Dr. David Jeremiah: Is that right?

Dr. James Dobson: I just couldn't. It was so emotional, it was such a difficult thing to go through that I just didn't have any energy left with which to pray. But boy, Shirley was praying and people around the country and maybe around the world were praying. And we saw evidence of that, but they carried me. It was like holding up Moses arms when he couldn't hold them up himself. And I really don't know what people do when they don't have that. You have said in your book that you

believe that God either allows, or in some cases, causes the suffering that we go through. How so?

Dr. David Jeremiah: Well, I just think that there are things that we learn through the bends in the road, through the disruptive moments that we couldn't possibly learn in any other way. I remember writing down in my journal, I don't know where this came from, but storms or problems in life are situations engineered by God to demonstrate our inadequacies so that we will look at His sufficiency as our only alternative. And when you're a type A, like I am, Dr. Dobson, and you're a hard driver, hard charger. You almost, like you said a few moments ago, get the impression that if it's a challenge that just gets your adrenaline flowing and you can go, but there are some things that happen in life, and cancer's one of them, that you do not have any control over.

Dr. James Dobson: You're out of control.

Dr. David Jeremiah: And it's just either God or there isn't any hope. And you realize then that in reality to your situation in life anyway. Without Him, you can't do anything. With him, you can do all things. But the storms and the difficulties and the bends in the road just reminds you of your dependence on God.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, your journey lasted for a number of years. In fact, you finally went through a stem cell procedure. It's important to explain. There's a difference between stem cells that cause the death of an embryo, which we're opposed to, and the use of a person's own stem cell.

Dr. David Jeremiah: A lot of people don't really understand what a stem cell transplant is. They think that you're injected with some kind of stem cells that cure you. And I really wasn't sure what it was either when they started talking about doing this. But during the time I was in remission, after I first had chemotherapy, they did a process called apheresis, where they ran my blood out of my body and through a machine and back in, and they collected the stem cells. In fact, they collected 18 bags of stem cells and they put them in the freezer. And my oncologist said, just in case we ever need them. Well, when this recurrence came, they told me that I was a candidate for stem cell transplant. And what happens is they give you these toxic chemicals that take all of your, my white count went way down under 200. And if you didn't have stem cells to reinvest in your system, you die.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, the reason you had to go through this stem cell transplant procedure is that your cancer came back.

Dr. David Jeremiah: Exactly. Actually I had the surgery and they found out what it was. They told me that my disease was not a surgeon's disease, but a chemist's disease. They sent me back to the Scripps Clinic. I went through the basic chemotherapy regimen, ended up having my spleen removed in the process. And I was declared in remission and I stayed in remission for three years. And then one time when I was going back to see my son play football back in Boone, I was actually staying

in Franklin Graham's condo up in Boone and I had a very difficult experience because one of the B symptoms of this disease are night sweats. And that happened and I knew something was wrong. And I went and had a couple of more checkups. And I found out that I had evidence of recurrence. They took out the polyp and discovered that it was back.

Dr. James Dobson: Now that was in '98.

Dr. David Jeremiah: Eight. Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Okay.

Dr. David Jeremiah: Everybody who ever has this disease, always praised that the first shot that you take is going to cure it and take care of you. And of course, there are no guarantees for any of that. But I remembered how hard it was for me to have to tell my family that now, I was going to do this again. And I think the hardest thing for me was, I was on my way to this game. My son Daniel was a quarterback at Appalachian State University and I had to tell him in the middle of his season, what was going on. I don't know why that was so hard for me because I knew it would be difficult for him to deal with. Then I had to tell my other children, and then I had to tell my church, here we go again. The same grace that got me through the first time took me through the second time too.

Dr. James Dobson: Was that the low point?

Dr. David Jeremiah: I think it was. I think when it reoccurred that might have been as low as I got in the whole situation, because there was so much disappointment. I thought that I had beaten this and it was over with, but it wasn't.

Dr. James Dobson: So, you went through the stem cell procedure and you are in remission today.

Dr. David Jeremiah: Exactly. Just last week, I went back for my annual scan and all of the blood tests and the doctors have told me that everything's exactly the way it was the year before, which is what you always want to hear.

Dr. James Dobson: It sure is.

Dr. David Jeremiah: And I feel strong and been able to go back to doing what I love to do. And it's a thrilling thing to see that God has granted me these extra days.

Dr. James Dobson: Here at the end of the program, we have a recording that I want to share with our listeners. It was on Mother's Day.

Dr. David Jeremiah: It was on Mother's Day. And it was really, it was almost embarrassing.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's hear it.

Dr. David Jeremiah: You can be seated, if you will please. Let me just take a moment, and first of all, I have to tell you when I was sick before and had been gone for a number of weeks, I came back and I got a very wonderful welcome like this. I don't think we had the slides on the screen. And the next week I got a letter from a man who had visited that at our church that week from Wisconsin. He said, I was just overwhelmed at the way they honor the pastor in your church. He said, do they do that every week? I said, I said, no, you have to go to the hospital. But I got to tell you something, it is so good for me to look out here. And I haven't been in this building on this platform for the longest time I've been away from the ministry in 30 years.

I told my wife today. It's like, I feel as nervous as I did the first time I ever preached. It's just like, I don't know if I'm going to be able to do this or not, but I want to take just a minute and thank you for your prayers because I've never, ever sensed a congregation or even heard of a congregation that prays like you people do and how you've prayed for me. And your cards, I've had so many cards and some of you have sent me four and five different cards and classes have sent me cards and children have sent me cards and the choir has just gone out of their way to let me know how much they have prayed for me. And so many of them have called and written and people brought food and I've been trying to think how in the world can I ever thank everybody for what you all have done?

I'll have to take another six weeks off to catch up, but I hope you'll understand my heart, that I do truly appreciate your gracious spirit and your love. And we have a wonderful thing that God has done for us here. And I'm doing pretty good. I thank God for His goodness. I'm going to be here this morning.

Dr. James Dobson: Does that bring back memories? Just hearing the words? You said, you hadn't heard that?

Dr. David Jeremiah: I've never listened to that clip until today, but I remember now all of the things happened and how nervous I was that day, coming back to the church. Well, someone told me one time, we're either in the midst of a storm or we're coming out of a storm or we're about to go into a storm. That seems kind of like almost a negative way to approach life. But it's not negative, it's just real. Storms are a part of life. Our landing on the other side is guaranteed, but stormy seas are a part of getting there. And I think that the best thing we can do is to prepare our hearts. I think the Psalms, one of the reasons I committed so much of this book to the Psalms is because the Psalms deal with the realities.

David never, ever tried to look past the difficult things in his life. He cried out to God. He talked about life as it really was. And we do not have in the Christian Church today, much of a theology of adversity. We have a lot of theologies of prosperity and other things that have surfaced, but adversity is a part of life and adversity can be a friend or it can be a foe, depending on how we approach it. And I think the Bible has been given to us in a very real way to help us each one, prepare for the times that come that are difficult. There's no attempt on the



part of the word of God to make us believe that we're going to sail on smooth seas all the way to the other shore. So, if we just study the Word of God and understand, this is for us, we will then have the information and the strength that we need. And I tell people when they ask me, well, what will I do when I get there? And all I can say to them is, I don't know, but when you get there, you'll know. God will help you. He comes at the moment of your need.

Dr. James Dobson: If you're rooted in Him.

Dr. David Jeremiah: If you're rooted in the Scripture, if you're rooted in your relationship with Him, He will be there with you and He will be there for you in a way you cannot imagine.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, we've been talking to Dr. David Jeremiah, who has written a book called *When Your World Falls Apart*. And there are just a lot of people out there who have had their world fall apart, and some of them fairly recently. And I know that this discussion has been right on target. We're not through talking to you, Dr. Jeremiah, there's so much more to discuss here. And we're going to ask you to be with us again next time, because there are those people out there that are going through times of disillusionment and pain. They can't find answers and the pieces don't fit. Will you be with us again next time?

Dr. David Jeremiah: I'd be happy to.

Roger Marsh: You've been listening to part one of Dr. James Dobson's emotional discussion with author and Pastor Dr. David Jeremiah here on Family Talk. You know, cancer is such a devastating disease that unfortunately truly impacts all of us, either personally or relationally. If you'd like to pray for someone in your life who is battling this disease, or if you yourself are walking through a cancer diagnosis right now, we'll be happy to talk with you. You can contact our ministry offices at (877) 732-6825 and a member of our staff will be happy to take your call. They're standing by waiting to pray with you and to listen to you. Again, that number is (877) 732-6825. Now, for more information about Dr. Jeremiah and his flourishing ministry, go to [drjamesdobson.org/broadcast](http://drjamesdobson.org/broadcast). And when you get there, you'll see a link for his book called, *When Your World Falls Apart*, which was the basis for this interview. You can find all that content and more at [drjamesdobson.org/broadcast](http://drjamesdobson.org/broadcast).

Be sure to join us again tomorrow, as we conclude Dr. Dobson's conversation with Dr. David Jeremiah. They'll be addressing the Christian misconceptions about suffering and the ways that God personally comforts us during trials. That's coming up next time right here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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