



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Infertility and Miscarriage – Part 1

Guest(s): Lynn Behnke, Leslie Snodgrass, Janet Malcom, and Dr. Roy Stringfellow

Air Date: April 8, 2020

[Listen to the broadcast](#)

NOTE: This transcript may contain minor errors and/or discrepancies from the audio. This copy may be updated.

- Dr. 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: There are few tragedies in life that compare to the emotional pain that accompanies infertility. Recent medical research has shown that there's a frightening trend in both of these areas. Experts say that nearly 15% of all pregnancies tragically end in miscarriage. And the Center for Disease Control says over six million women suffer with infertility every year. Chances are, you have a friend or family member who has experienced this kind of heartache, or maybe you and your spouse are struggling through this difficult journey right now. Well, we pray that this broadcast will be an encouragement to those who are hurting. Today you're going to hear from three women who have suffered a miscarriage or have battled infertility. Their names are Lynn Behnke, Leslie Snodgrass, and Janet Malcolm. They started an organization called Stepping Stones, which directly ministers to these hurting mothers and their families. Now since the original recording, these three ladies have retired, but Bethany Christian Services is continuing their mission. This is a highly emotional and honest discussion that will certainly touch your heart. Here now is Dr. James Dobson to tell you more about today's guests.
- Dr. Dobson: We have three women here who have experienced infertility, Janet Malcolm, Lynn Behnke, and Leslie Snodgrass. It's a delight to have you all with us today. In fact, why don't you start by telling us how you came to be here? I think that's kind of an exciting story. We had contacted you, Lynn, because of your work with the Stepping Stones organization, but how did that result in the three of you being here?
- Lynn Behnke: We were so excited. As soon as Diana called me, I called Janet to make sure we had enough money in the account to come out here. And by the time I called Leslie, I had Janet on call waiting saying, "My husband says, 'If you have an opportunity to see Dr. Dobson, this is too important. Even if I have to pay for the

whole trip myself, you're going.'" And so Janet called and said, "See if Leslie can go too."

Leslie Snodgrass: It was a general consensus.

Dr. Dobson: Was your husband that generous?

Leslie Snodgrass: Oh yeah, he was thrilled.

Dr. Dobson: And then your church also came through and helped support your trip. Is that right?

Janet Malcom: Our world outreach committee.

Lynn Behnke: In a small ministry like this, there's not a lot that the church as a corporate body can do and they were just excited to be able to help.

Dr. Dobson: I'm delighted to have you here. I want to hear your stories individually, how you came to this moment. I'd like to have just a little bit of the details and then we'll take it from there. And Janet, we're going to start with you.

Janet Malcom: I was diagnosed with endometriosis in 1979. We'd been trying for almost a year. It's kind of funny because my husband and I had decided, we'd been married five years, and we were deciding we needed a change in our lives and that we either needed to move to the mountains or we needed to have a baby. Believe me, we should have moved to the mountains because if we had known what we were headed for, we probably would have gone there. But-

Dr. Dobson: That was a tough year, wasn't it?

Janet Malcom: It was, it was. I had surgery in 1979, had one ovary removed and a wedge taken out of the other one. And we just expected the best. And about another year passed and nothing had happened. And they figured that the endometriosis had come back again, sent me to an infertility specialist. We went through the laparoscope again to see what was wrong and there was scar tissue from the previous surgery that was causing trouble. So he did a, let's see, this would be a fourth surgery by this time and removed the endometriosis that had reoccurred and the scar tissue and we waited again. And it just didn't work.

Dr. Dobson: Were you, during that year, saying, "Dear God, why can't we have a baby?"

Janet Malcom: Oh, that's probably the least of what I was saying. The Lord was so patient with me. I was really angry and bitter and I prayed that the Lord would send someone to my door to ring my doorbell that I could open up and they'd say, "Can I help you with a problem?" I was so desperately wanting someone to talk to about this because I was not dealing well with it. I was angry and I couldn't

understand. I felt like it was my right as a woman. I was created a woman, I had the right to be a mother. I'd always wanted to be a mother.

Dr. Dobson: When you were a little girl, did you look forward to that?

Janet Malcom: Yes, always. I babied my little brother and finally my mother gave me a little sister when I was ten and I babied her. And I just always had a motherly instinct too. My husband didn't like being babied so it was time to do something different.

Dr. Dobson: Either that or move to the mountains, right?

Janet Malcom: That's right. That's right. But it was an answer to prayer to find Lynn and Leslie. And once we started working with Stepping Stones, I was able to get my mind off of my problems and reach out to other people and just to be able to say, "Hey, I know how you feel. I feel the same way." And once I got into the Word and the Lord brought many special miracles into our lives and worked it all out. Hindsight's always 20/20. But all things were working for good.

Dr. Dobson: Lynn, have you come a similar pathway?

Lynn Behnke: No, not really. My husband's father died when he was real young and he wasn't sure he ever could be a good father because he hadn't had a model. So we were married several years before he decided, "Today, now we're going to have a baby." And just like everybody else, we assume that we're going to start today and that nine months later, we'll have a baby. I took a job expecting to work there for six months and then stop to prepare a nursery at home and I was there for six years. I've always been fairly content because I never let myself want anything that I couldn't have. So I handled not being able to get pregnant pretty well until I finally did get pregnant and then lost the baby.

Dr. Dobson: Did you tell everybody at work you were leaving?

Lynn Behnke: Oh yes. Yes. And I was so looking forward to being at home. And I'd really kind of waited those six years for a baby to make the decision in my life to change my life instead of taking control of my own life, which I think is a mistake that a lot of infertile women make. But then losing the baby was hard because I'd finally allowed myself really to want a baby.

Dr. Dobson: Did you, as a little girl look forward to motherhood as Janet did? Were you-

Lynn Behnke: No. No, I was into books and science and all kinds of other things. I wasn't ever domestic. But my husband and I had both been teachers and nurturing children was something that the desire to do had grown in us together. And I knew he would be a good father and that was something that we just looked forward to doing together.

Dr. Dobson: When did the realization sink in on you that you weren't going to be able to have children, or did you ever give up?

Lynn Behnke: I don't think that I gave up. I trusted God. I'd been through a broken engagement before I was married. I learned then that if this wasn't what God had in store for me, and I thought it was so good, that he must have something even better. And I found that was true when I met my husband. So I believed that if God wasn't going to give me a baby, that he must have something better in store for me, and I trusted him that he would give me the desire for whatever it was that he had for me. So I didn't give up. But losing the baby when I finally was going to have what we had decided that we wanted was difficult.

Dr. Dobson: You sound like you didn't go through quite the struggle that Janet did. Is that right?

Lynn Behnke: I think that's right.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah.

Lynn Behnke: I approached it more-

Dr. Dobson: So women deal with this individually.

Janet Malcom: Some of us are more like Peter.

Dr. Dobson: Well, Leslie, let's hear your story.

Leslie Snodgrass: Well, I'm kind of between the two of Janet and Lynn. It's really neat the way God has put us together because we each come at it from a different angle and each of us come at it differently emotionally. David and I had been married a year and we didn't want to wait a long time to have children because we had married late and so we started almost immediately. And I can remember it being a real surprise to me that something I had taken for granted all my life, that I would have a child, was not within my control. That something that essential to my body and my person, my femininity, was out of my hands.

Dr. Dobson: All three of you have made reference to that, that it came as a shock to you. It was a surprise, it was an assumption.

Leslie Snodgrass: Well I think we just take it for granted.

Lynn Behnke: [crosstalk 00:08:44] and go after it.

Janet Malcom: Any woman can have a baby, you always hear that.

Leslie Snodgrass: Well, and as a Christian woman, that's essential. That's something you feel like God wants you to do, to grow and nurture His family and bring them up in the

Lord. And I went through all the infertility workup. Not all of them, but most of the major ones, I think, an infertility specialist would recommend. And we never did find a problem in four years. After two years of going for Clomid and monthly checkups, I did conceive and I lost the baby. And like Lynn, that was a real shock, again, that once you achieved a pregnancy that did not automatically mean a live birth. And that to me was probably my hardest struggle with infertility because it raised all the spiritual questions that hadn't really quite sunk in.

Dr. Dobson: "Why God?"

Leslie Snodgrass: Why God? Why would this be created to be taken? And we don't have all the answers, but we know He is all powerful and has His reasons.

Dr. Dobson: Now the women that I've talked to who are having this problem and certainly those that write us speak of an outrage, of an incredible frustration and an anger, an anger at God, an anger at their friends, an anger at people within the family that are able to produce children and some of them more than they want. Did you all experience that?

Janet Malcom: It's hard to come from a fertile family. Every time I turned around, either my sister or my sister-in-law was expecting a baby again. And after going through surgery and surgery and surgery and month after month after month just waiting, and you just scream out. And really, it's not that you're not happy for them, it's just that, "won't it ever be my turn, you know? Will I never be able to announce that we're going to have a baby?"

Dr. Dobson: Janet, can you remember an afternoon perhaps, or a family occasion when one of those pregnancies was announced and what you felt and what you thought when you went home?

Leslie Snodgrass: I remember it, Janet.

Dr. Dobson: Can you really?

Janet Malcom: I hope my family won't listen to this. Yes, I can remember a time when we had lost a baby we thought we were going to get through adoption. And it was a little boy and we had gone out and bought all the cute little boy things. And not too much after that, I found out that my sister-in-law was expecting again. And I knew in my heart it was going to be a boy and the Lord was going to ask me to give my clothes to her. I just knew it was going to happen. She had a boy. And the first time she brought him home, I had to force myself to go and try to act happy, try to act excited for her. And in the midst of that, we were having dinner. And I'm from a very large family and we were all eating. And all of a sudden one of my other sisters said, "Oh, by the way, Janet, did you know I'm pregnant again?" This was her third. And when I looked up, the whole family

had their faces down in their food and it was like, "What is she going to do? Is she going to cry?" It was just dead silent. Oh, it was just the worst.

Dr. Dobson: Did they know what you were going through?

Janet Malcom: Oh, sure.

Dr. Dobson: Did your sister-in-law know?

Janet Malcom: Yes. Yes. And looking back, they're in a awfully hard place too because, how do you tell them? How do you tell someone that you're expecting? And I'm sure that she felt like that was the best way and the best time that she could do it. And it was devastating.

Dr. Dobson: One of the purposes for this broadcast is to help women who are going through what you're talking about to know that they're not alone. And so before we get into some suggestions and some solutions, I'd really like to make sure we have described the circumstances. What is it like being infertile and wanting a baby like you all were talking about and going through Christmas?

Lynn Behnke: I think we've written several articles about that because that's a time that people are really low because all the commercials are about all the children under the tree and Santa Claus and the stockings and-

Leslie Snodgrass: Family traditions.

Lynn Behnke: And when you get too old to have somebody hanging stockings for you, you make up for it by hanging the stockings for your children. And when there isn't anybody there to do that, a whole part of your life is just gone.

Dr. Dobson: That's still a tender spot for you, isn't it, Lynn?

Lynn Behnke: It is.

Leslie Snodgrass: It never really, you don't ever forget it. I don't know if maybe the Lord has just maintained that sensitivity within us because he has work for us to do in this area, but it's still... every time I still think of sitting in the doctor's office with all these pregnant women around me discussing their Lamaze classes when I'm just there to see if I can continue to take Clomid, it still hurts and it can still bring tears.

Lynn Behnke: Or Mother's Day or Father's Day.

Leslie Snodgrass: Or Mother's Day. Last year, I had to stay home from church on Mother's Day just because I had special friends in the congregation. I knew it was tearing them up and I just couldn't handle that. It sounds crazy, but that's ...

Dr. Dobson: In fact, it does sound crazy to people who haven't been there. And that's part of the problem, isn't it?

Lynn Behnke: It is.

Dr. Dobson: The rest of the world doesn't understand.

Lynn Behnke: So many of our mothers had more children than they wanted. It's really hard. There wasn't birth control then. So it's real difficult for them to identify with getting to the point of desperately wanting a baby. For so many of them, it just came so naturally.

Dr. Dobson: And so many of them are being aborted today, too.

Janet Malcom: That's a real big thing with readers. "Why would God allow all these millions and millions of babies to be aborted when I just want one?" It's a hard question to deal with.

Lynn Behnke: Going back to that, Janet's sister announcing at the table and all the family waiting to see how she was going to react to it, we found that it's because infertility has a lot to do with how we see ourselves as women. If they don't tell us like we're normal women and include us in the announcement with everybody else, it's just one more area in which we feel excluded. We feel outside the realm of womanhood.

Leslie Snodgrass: Isolated.

Dr. Dobson: Okay. So this is-

Janet Malcom: It was obvious. It was obvious.

Dr. Dobson: Really an assault on the self-esteem, isn't it?

Janet Malcom: It was obvious everyone else knew that she was expecting-

Lynn Behnke: Janet was singled out.

Janet Malcom: But I was singled out and just watched to see how she was going to react to it.

Leslie Snodgrass: I think it's almost easier as far as they see it to tell them in a crowd because Janet probably won't burst into tears and run screaming from the room in front of her entire family.

Janet Malcom: There isn't an easy way for-

Leslie Snodgrass: It's difficult.

Janet Malcom: Looking back, it would have been hard no matter what way they told me. I would have taken it hard.

Dr. Dobson: So they're in a tough spot too?

Janet Malcom: They are.

Roger Marsh: Well, this is certainly a sensitive subject and a tender one at that. And these are some brave women who have openly shared their hearts today here on Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh and if these stories describe your life's journey right now, please know we are here for you. You can call us at (877)-732-6825 and a member of our staff will be happy to talk with you and to pray with you. Again, that number is (877)-732-6825. Now as we rejoin this conversation, the women in our panel are going to be describing their husbands' responses to this heartache. They'll also share the collective love and support that they have developed for one another during this difficult season. Here now is the remainder of their meaningful conversation with Dr. James Dobson on this special edition of Family Talk.

Leslie Snodgrass: Well, I think I was especially blessed in that he didn't do anything that was wrong except complain about getting a sperm test. And my immediate argument was, "With what I have been through, I don't want to hear anything about you getting a sperm test." But I think that there are some men that just withdraw within themselves and, because of not either knowing how or quite what to say, don't say anything to their wife as encouragement.

Janet Malcom: My husband had sent me some flowers once and I have kept the card. It was years ago. And he just said, "I don't understand why you're having to go through this." I had just found out that I was going to have to have another surgery and I was just so low. And he said, "I don't understand why you're having to go through this, but I just want you to know that I love you." I'll keep that forever. It will last me for years. I think that was the last time I got flowers, but it'll last me for years.

Dr. Dobson: He doesn't have to come up with answers. All he has to do is understand.

Janet Malcom: Just a hug. If they would just come up and just hold me.

Dr. Dobson: I asked this of the four of you. Isn't it common also for people to begin to make snide comments about their sex life?

Lynn Behnke: People offered to demonstrate for us.

Dr. Dobson: You're kidding me.

Lynn Behnke: Because we must not be doing it right.

Leslie Snodgrass: Yes. Most of the time, people mean well and the suggestions and the comments are well intentioned. But like Lynn's comment, that has happened. And some of the letters we've received have just been really kind of tragic.

Lynn Behnke: But you have no intimate life anymore. The doctor knows everything there is to know and it's no more love making for love making. It's-

Dr. Dobson: Yeah, on schedule.

Janet Malcom: But I can remember when my husband was in Oklahoma and he called and I said, "You have to be home tonight. It's got to be tonight." And he drove all the way home and it was two o'clock and he was too tired.

Dr. Dobson: Worn out.

Janet Malcom: We missed it. But that's how it becomes, it's-

Dr. Dobson: And then to go through that and lay your life out and have nothing happen also. I think we ought to talk a little bit about miscarriage because I'm really getting some incredible letters on that subject. Lynn, you went through that.

Lynn Behnke: Yes. And that was the low point in my infertility. And I approach these things intellectually, philosophically, yes. And the questions that I had that nobody could answer. Like, "now, if we hear all this about aborted babies and how since they really are babies, they should be buried." I mean, they're real babies. Okay? When I had a miscarriage, they said, "We'd like to take this to the lab." And so I was thinking in terms of an autopsy to find out what was wrong. They never brought it back and it didn't occur to me until later: that was my baby. I don't know what I would've done with that little tiny body, but it just seems wrong to have discarded it somehow. But all these people who know that these aborted babies are babies do not recognize the miscarriage.

Janet was talking to somebody who said, "Do you mean they had a miscarriage or they lost a baby?" Like it was a whole different thing. And people couldn't tell me, theologians couldn't tell me if I now have a baby in heaven. They couldn't tell me what was the appropriate way to dispose of that baby's body. There is no legitimized way to grieve over a miscarriage, which is one of the hardest things.

Leslie Snodgrass: Society typically does not allow you to grieve for a miscarriage. The first thing I can remember hearing after both mine was, "Well, it's probably for the best." Well, most of the comments that people would address in that way are generally true, but that's not what you want to hear. That does not help you resolve your grief. And it is honestly grief. And-

Dr. Dobson: What they're trying to say is that if the baby had been carried to term, it might have been deformed.

Leslie Snodgrass: Yes, but we have decided that it is not right to abort a defective baby. So why should we [crosstalk 00:20:52].

Dr. Dobson: You can't have it both ways, can you?

Leslie Snodgrass: We have gotten a letter recently from a RESOLVE chapter, I don't recall which one, but they had had a memorial service for miscarried children and stillborn children. It wasn't anything elaborate and I probably would assume it was fairly ecumenical, but that, I mean, it gave you an outlet for that grief and that loss and it allowed you to share with others that had experienced that.

Janet Malcom: Acknowledge that you lost a baby.

Leslie Snodgrass: Kind of letting go of that. And I really believe I have two earthbound children and two in heaven. And that gives me comfort.

Dr. Dobson: And you're going to see them someday?

Leslie Snodgrass: I'm going to see them someday. And I think it's important for women that have experienced that, like Lynn, to find that joy because there is joy in eternity and knowing that.

Lynn Behnke: "He that has begun a work in you will carry it out to completion." I believe miscarried babies will be in heaven also. We had a reader send us, would you call it an announcement? And it was a memorial to their baby that they lost in miscarriage and it had a poem in it and it had a beautiful picture, a drawing of a mother and a baby. And it had the date that they lost the baby. I thought it was great. She said that they sent it to family and friends to acknowledge that they had lost a baby.

Roger Marsh: Well, this has been a very tender edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and we hate to interrupt this broadcast right now, but Lynn, Leslie, and Janet still have a lot to share, so be sure to tune in again tomorrow for the remainder of their moving conversation with Dr. Dobson. These three brave ladies brought to light a lot of unknown hurts that accompany infertility. Make sure to pay attention to those in your life who are struggling with this pain and put your arm around them. Visit today's broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org for more information about our guests and also their ministry. That's drjamesdobson.org and then tap on the broadcast icon at the top of the page.

Now, we also encourage you to get plugged in with us on social media. The next time you're on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, or YouTube, be sure to search for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. All of our profiles have uplifting content that you'll want to interact with and then share with your loved ones. You can read various articles or blogs that we've posted. You can listen to radio broadcasts or watch our latest informative videos. If you're tired of being discouraged by the negative content online, be sure to like and follow our pages

for Family Talk. Simply search for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and get connected with encouraging and godly content. You will be glad you did.

Finally, if you have an Amazon Alexa, you can now listen to Family Talk's daily broadcast there. This smart device allows you, through a hands-free command, to hear our latest programs. Go to drjamesdobson.org/Alexa to learn how to activate your Amazon Alexa.

And be sure to join us again tomorrow for the conclusion of Dr. Dobson's conversation with his panel of these three very special women. And next time you'll also hear from Dr. Roy Stringfellow who offers a needed clinician's perspective. That's coming up right here on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Have a blessed day.

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

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hi everyone. Dr Tim Clinton here. When you think about your family and where they'll be when you're no longer living, are you worried? Are you confident? You hopeful? What kind of a legacy are you leaving for your children and their children right now? Here at Family Talk, we're committed to helping you understand the legacy that you're leaving your family. Join us today at drjamesdobson.org. You're going to find helpful insights, tips, and advice from Dr. Dobson himself. And remember, your legacy matters.

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.