



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: When Love Ends – Part 2

Guest(s): Jackie M. Johnson

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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: Well, hello everyone, and welcome again to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Family Talk is produced by the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Dr. Dobson founded Family Talk in 2010 because, as he puts it, he felt God's hand on his back, guiding him to continue to fight for families and for righteousness in the culture. Here we are 12 years later and Dr. Dobson is still fighting the good fight, and today's broadcast is just another example of God's hand on Dr. Dobson's life.

Now, today, we are bringing you the conclusion of Dr. Dobson's conversation with author and blogger, Jackie M. Johnson. The topic of their discussion is Jackie's book, *When Love Ends and the Ice Cream Carton is Empty*. I mentioned yesterday that we are giving away copies of Jackie's book while supplies last. To request your copy, just visit drjamesdobson.org/whenloveends, or give us a call at (877) 732-6825.

Jackie M. Johnson is an author and blogger who has written three books. She blogs for drjamesdobson.org, and has a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and communications from Trinity International University. In addition to being an author, Jackie is Dr. Dobson's executive assistant and a beloved member of the team here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

Here now as the second half of Dr. Dobson's conversation with Jackie Johnson, talking about how you can carry on when love ends.

Dr. James Dobson: Jackie, you talk in your book about grieving and say that it's important to let yourself grieve. Do some people just stuff it down and deny it and think it'll just go away and then it doesn't? What role does grieving play? When there's a breakup, there's a ripping and tearing of flesh. You feel cut in half and you sometimes find it even difficult to breathe. Talk about the grieving process.

Jackie M. Johnson: Well, that's very true, Dr. Dobson. A lot of people handle their emotions by stuffing them or ignoring them and thinking the pain will just go away, but I

think one of the most important lessons that I've learned from getting over a breakup is you really do need to grieve your losses. I didn't know this, that grieving wasn't just for a death, but it's for all sorts of losses. It's a normal reaction to loss and pain, because with a breakup, especially a long-term relationship, you have a lot of losses. You've lost a friend, you've lost someone you love, you've lost your hope of a future with this person, you've lost closeness, affection.

Dr. James Dobson: Self-respect sometimes.

Jackie M. Johnson: Oh my goodness, there are so many losses. It's been said, if you don't grieve well, you grieve all the time.

Dr. James Dobson: What form does that grieving take place? I told you last time that when I broke up with Shirley, she cried all night. Is that proper grieving?

Jackie M. Johnson: Well, that's part of it. First, you need to acknowledge that there was a loss because you can't just say, "Oh well, something was there, now it's gone. A loss has happened. Okay, I acknowledge it." Really, the main thing is to ask for God's help, invite him into the process. You cannot do this on your own, you need to talk to him about your situation.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you have anybody come up to you and say, "Jackie, get over it. It's done, it's gone. You should not look to the past, look to the future," do you ever hear those kind of things?

Jackie M. Johnson: Oh, absolutely. But how do you just get over it? I remember when I was writing this book, I asked a number of people, how do you get over it? Some people would say, "Well, you just do. Well, you just do." Well, how? I'm a very practical person and I like to know the hows. I think in asking God for help and inviting him into your pain has got to be paramount. Then like you said, Dr. Dobson, let yourself be sad. Tears are cleansing, they're an emotional release. They help unblock the stuck pain and get it out of you.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, when you begin to recover, how do you go onto another relationship? Are you afraid that you'll be hurt again? I think some people don't ever want to go through that again and therefore they wall themselves off. Have you seen that?

Jackie M. Johnson: I have, mm-hmm. but there's what happens and then there's what you do about what happens. The same thing could happen to you and to me and we could handle it totally differently because we have a different perspective and we handle things differently. Someone could break up and put up a wall and somebody could break up and jump right into the next thing. We're all wired differently that way.

But in the process of grieving the loss, there's a really helpful exercise you can do, is to recognize what was lost and what remains. Maybe take out a notebook

or a piece of paper or your computer and say, "You know what? This is what I've lost. I've lost friendship, I've lost affection," whatever, list your losses. Then on the other column, list what remains. I have a lot to be thankful for, I still have the love of my family and friends, I have my health. I have a great big God who loves me and I can trust God is healing me. I think that's a helpful exercise.

Dr. James Dobson: Have you ever been to a grieving group? Getting together with people who are also suffering a loss and being able to talk openly about it? You've never done that?

Jackie M. Johnson: I've never done it, but I have friends that have done that.

Dr. James Dobson: I think that can be helpful, because otherwise you do bottle it up inside and you're alone with your grief.

Jackie M. Johnson: That's a very good point.

Dr. James Dobson: I think that's one of the most painful things of all, is looking ahead and saying, "I have nobody to love. Nobody loves me. Nobody will ever love me." That's the way you feel, I'm not saying that's valid.

Jackie M. Johnson: Right, right.

Dr. James Dobson: But being able to express that to one another can be a helpful process.

Jackie M. Johnson: That is absolutely so true, because you want to tell your story, you want to get it out of you, because when it's swirling in your head, it's not being processed. When you talk about it, when you get it out, it really helps to talk with a trusted friend about it and tell your story, yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Have you ever had a friend relationship with somebody that you've broken up with after having been deeply committed to each other?

Jackie M. Johnson: You mean being friends after dating?

Dr. James Dobson: That's what I'm saying.

Jackie M. Johnson: I have friends that are able to do that. I have not been able to do that very well, but it depends. I guess it would depend on the person. I would feel like they'd have to ask for forgiveness and maybe have some, "I'm sorry," kind of talks before you'd be friends. I think time has to go by and the person who hurt you needs to be sorry.

Dr. James Dobson: That's key, Jackie. Time is a big healer. You will heal in time if you allow the Lord to lead and you give yourself to the grieving process. You're never quite the same, but you do, I think, get to the point that you can breathe again.

Jackie M. Johnson: Absolutely. I think forgiveness plays a big role in that. I really struggled writing the forgiveness chapter. I think that was the hardest chapter to write because I wanted it to be right, I really wanted to help people get through this. It's challenging, but it's possible to forgive someone that's really hurt you and to forgive yourself.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. I mentioned yesterday that I've written a book called *Love Must Be Tough*, that's on a similar theme, about what you do when you realize it's not mutual. All of that grieving process and the anger and the deep feelings of rejection and everything occurs. I'm speaking of marital love now, when that breaks up and one partner wanted it to survive and the other partner didn't, and then there is this long process that goes on. The last chapter that I wrote is also about forgiveness. As a matter of fact, the entire book tells you how to maintain a relationship if you can, and that often, if you do the right thing, you can continue it, but then you lose the marriage for another reason, the one who has been hurt and rejected no longer wants it. You walk the process of rebuilding a relationship and you begin to realize just how dirty it was, what was done to you, and the person changes completely and says, "I wouldn't take him back if I could." You ever been through that?

Jackie M. Johnson: No, I haven't, but I'm sure there are people out there listening that have and we're here to address that pain. One of my favorite Bible verses that I've learned in the whole forgiveness process is Colossians 3:13, "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Forgive, as the Lord forgave you. God has first forgiven us and he wants us to forgive others," which is not always easy, but is definitely possible when we know what forgiveness is and what it's not. I think that's where people get tripped up, because what I hear from a lot of people is, "If I forgive him, he's off the hook," but that's not true really.

Forgiveness is not forgetting what happened or acting the like everything's okay. It doesn't mean that you condone what happened or that you agree with it or like it. You're definitely not overlooking the offense and you're not letting the offender off the hook. Instead, so to speak, you're putting them on God's hook because we can trust him to deal fairly. He is our advocate, he's the one who deals with it. We don't have to find justice, He ensures that justice is served.

Dr. James Dobson: The relationship changes too. You can forgive without wanting to bring that person back into your life.

Jackie M. Johnson: Absolutely, right. You don't have to reconcile the relationship in a dating situation. You don't have to be around that person again. The thing that I learned too about forgiveness is that it releases you because when you don't forgive someone, you're the one who's hurting, but when you do forgive and let go of the bitterness and the resentment and the anger, then you're free, you find freedom, because forgiveness is the balm that heals the pain in your heart.

Dr. James Dobson: Jackie, I'd like you at this point to talk about various ways of reacting, and most of them are wrong. One of the ones that concerns me, when I see hurting singles particularly, it's as though they were at Los Angeles International Airport and they're standing down there watching the planes coming in. They've got them circling above and life can't go on until they get their plane down. It stifles growth, it stifles creativity. I appreciate the fact that you sat down and wrote about this, which is a proper response, trying to reach out and help others, but have you ever seen that process of saying, "Is this the one? No, he flew on by," and your whole life is on hold? It may be that God has another plan, and it's better to let Him bring events to pass than just freeze framing your life and feeling like it's over for me and I don't have anything and there's no future for me. That's one of the wrong approaches, do you agree?

Jackie M. Johnson: I do agree, because as we were created for a purpose and God has good purposes for us. I think when we're frozen in our emotional state or waiting for Mr. Right to come along, we're missing it. I think our first priority is to look at what God has for us. What does God have for me? Why am I here? What is my purpose here? Maybe your purpose is to be married and have children, maybe your purpose is to be single, but whatever it is, if you trust God, He will show you what that purpose is and you can live beyond your breakup and find meaning and purpose in what God has for you.

Roger Marsh: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio home of Dr. James Dobson, America's most trusted child psychologist. I'm Roger Marsh. However you're listening to us today, maybe on the radio, online, or on an app, we appreciate your joining us.

Today, Dr. Dobson is talking to author Jackie M. Johnson about her book, *When Love Ends and the Ice Cream Carton is Empty*. We are actually giving away copies of Jackie's book so if you'd like to request a copy, just visit drjamesdobson.org/whenloveends, or give us a call at 877-732-6925.

Here now is the conclusion of today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: What do you think about Paul's writing that says it's really better that you not marry? I don't understand that Scripture, because God was graciously giving us a satisfaction for the love and the attachment that we need with another person, but he put it all in sexual terms. If you can't be celibate and do what's right there, then it's better that you marry, but you can do that, it's better not to marry. Do you know the Scripture I'm talking about?

Jackie M. Johnson: I do. I think a lot of singles don't like that Scripture.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I know that all Scripture is God breathed.

Jackie M. Johnson: Of course.

Dr. James Dobson: But we don't understand it all, and I don't understand that one.

Jackie M. Johnson: No.

Dr. James Dobson: The best thing it ever happened to me was finding Shirley.

Jackie M. Johnson: Well, you are blessed, that's for sure. To the single out there who wants to get married or who doesn't want to get married, both of those choices are valid, but I think it really comes back down to, what does God have for me? God has blessed you with Mrs. Shirley Dobson, and I have been single my whole life, for decades. I wonder, why? I have to think this is God's plan for me right now. That could change tomorrow. I look at Nancy Leigh DeMoss, she got married when she was 58 years old. It could still happen.

Dr. James Dobson: To one of my best friends, as a matter of fact.

Jackie M. Johnson: Right. I'm not yet 58, it could happen. What does God have for me and follow that?

Dr. James Dobson: Are you still open?

Jackie M. Johnson: I am content and hopeful.

Dr. James Dobson: Are you demanding of God?

Jackie M. Johnson: I hope not. I hope I'm not demanding. I hope I'm humble and-

Dr. James Dobson: Do you understand what I mean by demanding? There are individuals who say, "If you don't satisfy this deep belonging within me, I can't serve you."

Jackie M. Johnson: Ooh, I don't think I'd want to box with God verbally. I think I've learned through the years that He's God, I'm not. He knows what He's doing, I can trust Him. That is the way that I want to live, humbly and boldly, coming before Him in prayer. Yes, I pray for a spouse and I pray for my friends, but it hasn't happened yet so I will pray on and trust Him.

Dr. James Dobson: You told me there's a particular passage within this book that you wanted to read on the air. Tell me what it is.

Jackie M. Johnson: I do. I really want people to know that even though things might seem really sad and hard and difficult today, you will bounce forward and things will get better. I just want to remind you of Psalm 143:7, that He heals the broken hearted and binds up their wounds. This excerpt is from my book, *When Love Ends and the Ice Cream Carton is Empty*. It's kind of an admonishment that everything is going to be okay, and sometimes that's just what we need to hear, is some words of comfort. I'm going to read that.

"You may not believe this right now, but the day will come when you don't think about him every day and the mention of his name doesn't pierce your heart like

a verbal arrow. You can drive past your special place and it no longer has a hold on you. It's just a place. You know God loves you and he is with you, and that makes all the difference. You come to realize that endings are a part of life and so are new beginnings. You learn that God heals brokenness and brings joy and hope and healing, and one day everything really will be okay, maybe not to today, but someday. One day you look up and smile as it begins to settle in your heart that God really is in control, that He cares, that He's working all things together for the good. In the midst of your mess, God surprises you and things begin to change. It's time to heal your broken heart. The rest of your life is waiting."

Dr. James Dobson: That's very tender to you, isn't it?

Jackie M. Johnson: Yeah, it is.

Dr. James Dobson: Jackie, I want to share something with you that you may or may not have thought, but I have in talking about this, and it is this, life is hard no matter what road you take. It is. We're promised another life in the world to come where there no tears, no sorrow, no sickness, no separation, but in this life, there are all of those things, and eventually you have to give up everything and yield to whatever process it is that takes your life.

Getting married looks like it may be the absolute solution to every problem for a person who's not married, but I'm telling you, that road is not easy either. Because to today, people come into marriage with all kinds of baggage. Many of them were raised without a father or maybe a mother, many of them have gone through tremendous pain and rejection in childhood and they're never quite the same thereafter. Then there is the power struggle of the early days of marriage. That's very hard too.

The single life sometimes is easier than a bad marriage. I would rather be single than be involved in a bad marriage. A lot of marriages are just toughing it out, just letting the Lord lead and praying. There are also cases where we're unequally yoked and you didn't know that until the marriage occurs, then all of a sudden that person doesn't share your faith, you can't pray together and you don't have a hope of eternal life together. There are also cases of abuse and abuse of children.

Marriage can be very difficult too, so take life as it comes, make the most of it. If the single life is what God has for you, put a smile on your face and take what wonderful gifts you've been given as you have and press on. Then if the Lord brings somebody into your life, then you take those steps one at a time and then make the decision to marry.

I don't know if anybody will understand what I just said. I've dealt with a lot of marriage counseling, I've dealt with a lot of people who are in a form of agony

of their own for having made a mistake and they realize it, some of them on the honeymoon.

Jackie M. Johnson: Hmm, wow.

Dr. James Dobson: I guess what I'm trying to say is whatever my lot thou has taught me to say, it is well with my soul.

Jackie M. Johnson: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: The title of the book is *When Love Ends and the Ice Cream Carton is Empty*. The ice cream carton represents those who are trying to get satisfaction from somewhere, even if it's overeating, is that what you're referring to?

Jackie M. Johnson: Right, right. I'm saying put down the ice cream carton, pick up your Bible, pick up this book, and there's a better way to heal.

Dr. James Dobson: How can they find it?

Jackie M. Johnson: The book is available on Amazon, Barnes & Noble, wherever books are sold.

Dr. James Dobson: Moody still?

Jackie M. Johnson: Yes, it's with Moody Publishers, mm-hmm.

Dr. James Dobson: And when did it come out?

Jackie M. Johnson: The book came out in 2010, but the principles in the book are timeless.

Dr. James Dobson: They are. Goodness, if Moody still has it in print, that means there's good stuff in this book.

Jackie M. Johnson: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: Jackie, it's fun talking to you about these subjects. You got tears in your eyes a few minutes ago. This means a lot to you, doesn't it?

Jackie M. Johnson: Well, it does. I've been through a lot of breakups myself and all of the wisdom in this book is hard won wisdom. I just want to help and bless other people. If I can help them find healing, then it's all worth it.

Dr. James Dobson: Are you writing now?

Jackie M. Johnson: Yes. I'm writing on the "Living Single" blog on the Family Talk website, and I'm thinking about ideas for my next book.

Dr. James Dobson: Thank you, Jackie, for being my guests and for all that you do to keep Shirley and my life together and to handle all the many responsibilities that come along here. I look forward to seeing what you're writing.

Jackie M. Johnson: Thank you, Dr. Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: Blessings to you.

Roger Marsh: A sobering, but encouraging, reminder that no matter what you're feeling right now, there is hope and there is healing in Jesus Christ. You've just heard the conclusion of Dr. Dobson's two-part conversation with author Jackie M. Johnson here on Family Talk. The topic of their conversation was Jackie's book, *When Love Ends and the Ice Cream Carton is Empty*, which came out of Jackie's personal experience and breakups. If you'd like to learn more about Jackie M. Johnson, to read her blogs, or even connect with her, visit drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. That's drjamesdobson.org/broadcast, or give us a call anytime at (877) 732-6825.

Were you able to relate to any of what Jackie was describing today or on yesterday's program, or perhaps maybe you know someone who's recently been through a difficult breakup? Well, we'd like to bless you with a copy of Jackie M. Johnson's book, so we're giving away copies of *When Love Ends and the Ice Cream Carton is Empty* while supplies last. To request your copy, just visit drjamesdobson.org/whenloveends, or give us a call at (877) 732-6825.

Thanks again for listening to Family Talk today. Dr. Dobson has been encouraging and advising families on the radio for over 40 years, and it's all to support from listeners just like you. God's blessings on you and your family, and be sure to join us again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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