



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Real Moms, Real Jesus – Part 2

Guest(s): Jill Savage

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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: Deep down every mom wishes she was the perfect parent. She wants to be more like the Instagram mom whose house is always bright and tidy, whose kids are always well behaved and who always makes it to church with the whole family 10 minutes early. Well, those picture perfect families are rarely as put together as they seem. And today's guest explains why striving to live up to arbitrary and unrealistic expectations of what parenting should look like is unhelpful and sometimes even dangerous.

Jill Savage: We define ourselves by the kind of car that we drive, or we don't drive, by whether our children are behaving, whether our children look good or don't look good. If we aren't careful, we will get caught up in that. And when I realized I was doing that as a mom, here's what I realized, I was becoming a controlling mom, because I wanted to control my children's behavior so they would look good and behave good, so I would look good. That is not the most effective parenting method. My value and self-worth needs to be based upon who I am in God's eyes and that's never going to change. And I think that is so important for us as moms to understand.

Roger Marsh: I'm Roger Marsh and today you're going to hear the balance of a conversation that Dr. Dobson had with author and speaker, Jill Savage. On yesterday's program, Jill described some common frustrations that moms have like kids demanding all of her attention all the time or being pulled in multiple directions or feeling as if she could never be alone in her own home. She also pointed out that Jesus experienced similar situations and feelings during His ministry on earth and explained some of the ways that He dealt with the mental and emotional exhaustion of always being wanted and needed and followed. Today on the program Dr. Dobson and Jill Savage will continue to discuss some of the obstacles and struggles that moms face today. But first let me remind you of who our guest is.

Jill Savage is a nationally recognized speaker who is passionate about encouraging families. She is the author or co-author of 14 books, including

Professionalizing Motherhood, Living with Less So Your Family Has More, and Real Moms... Real Jesus. In fact, that last title is the topic of today's conversation. Jill and her husband Mark are in full-time ministry, helping people in their marriages and improving the quality of their lives as God intended. Jill and Mark have five grown children, eight grandchildren, and they make their home in the appropriately named city of Normal, Illinois. Here now is the conclusion of Dr. Dobson's conversation with Jill Savage right here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, Jill let's pick up where we left off last time because we were moving rather systematically through your book and we talked about some of the major frustrations that mothers of young children feel. And I think the older ones do too in trying to keep up with everything. The first issue that we discussed was the feeling of never being alone, I can never have any time to myself. The second one had to do with the high demands that are made on mothers and everyone knows that that can create its own emotional stresses. Now let's move on to another frustration that I know affects every mother, especially those that have preschool children having to do with the lack of sleep. You can never get enough rest and I think that's a link to everything else because you don't cope very well when you're exhausted, when you're tired.

Jill Savage: You don't. And again, this was one of those places as I was reading through the biographies of Jesus, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, that I ran across the story of where Jesus was in a boat with His disciples and it says He was so tired that He fell fast asleep. I mean, it was one of those where... I mean, I just pictured, by the way it read in the Bible that His head hit the pillow and He was out and I thought, oh my gosh, I never thought about that Jesus would understand what that exhaustion feels like. Again, I just had never thought about His human experience, but then it says that in the middle of the night... So, He's in this boat with the disciples and in the middle of the night, a storm blows in and you know what the disciples do? They get scared and wake Him up.

Dr. James Dobson: That's right.

Jill Savage: And I thought, hello, that is my life, as a mother. My children wake up, when they were little, they would wake up needing to be fed. They wake up in the middle of the night cold. They have a bad dream; a storm does come in and it scares them. And I had never, ever thought about the fact that Jesus would understand what interrupted sleep feels like. But in that particular story in the Bible, that's exactly what happened. And I thought of all those times that I sat up at 3:00 AM, 4:00 AM, rocking a baby or nurturing a toddler that had had a bad dream and it had never crossed my mind to talk to Jesus about my frustration of being awakened or about just the reality of how exhausted I was and to recognize that He would understand that. I mean, that's why the subtitle of the book, *Real Moms... Real Jesus, is Meet the Friend Who Understands*, He lived a human experience and He knows what that feels like.

Dr. James Dobson: Jill, it is really surprising how many of the experiences of Jesus in that one gospel of Matthew relate to this topic. I hadn't really connected them to this point, but you really have come up with something here that is unique.

Jill Savage: It really transformed my thinking and the more that I read the stories of Jesus' life and His experience and recognized that they were similar to my life and my experience, what happened is He didn't feel so far away anymore. Suddenly that distance that I had been feeling before I took this little journey through the biographies of Jesus, suddenly that distance was closing and I didn't have a God who was distant and disconnected from me, but I truly have a friend who understands and I mean, the Bible talks about the Holy Spirit as being our friend and that's what Jesus is, is He understands us. When He faced those challenges, then the other thing that we can do is look at how did He handle that?

He handled that with grace and He handled it with love. Sometimes He handled it with anger. I mean, He did draw some boundary lines too. We certainly see righteous anger and understanding all of that. So, I think both as we look at His experiences that we understand, but then also how He lived His life, that we have so much that we can learn from that friend who understands,

Dr. James Dobson: Ryan didn't sleep through the night for four months. And I know a lot of parents who have kids who don't sleep through the night for a year or two, but for Ryan, it was four months and we were exhausted because we lived a very, very busy life in addition to being parents. One night we had just come to the end of our rope and Ryan was asleep and we got down by our bed and we just said, "Lord, would you let him sleep through the night tonight? I mean, just this one time, if we could get a complete night of sleep." And it was a Friday night, so we could sleep in on Saturday and we just almost begged the Lord for a favor here. The next morning the sun was up and we suddenly opened our eyes and we got up on our elbows and looked at each other and said, "He did it."

Jill Savage: I know you are.

Dr. James Dobson: What has gone wrong? Where is he?

Jill Savage: You're rushing in there to make sure they're okay.

Dr. James Dobson: Jill, you talk about being worried at night until the kids got in and I was the worrier, Shirley figured that out early on.

Jill Savage: So, she just let you handle that, huh?

Dr. James Dobson: She just let me handle it. She would go to sleep and I would pace the floor waiting for the kids to get in. I lost a lot of sleep that way, I'll tell you. Jill, the next item that you wrote about in this book, *Real Moms... Real Jesus* was betrayal. Why would a mom feel betrayed? What are the circumstances that are so common?

Jill Savage:

Well, I don't think that there's a human that hasn't experienced feeling betrayed at some point in time where somebody has broke a confidence, has in some way let them down. It wasn't until I was reading through the biographies of Jesus and I certainly came to the story of where Judas betrayed Jesus and which ultimately took Him to the cross. I'll add in disappointment is another part of that. Again, as I was reading through, I ran across where Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane and He said to His disciples... He knew what He was facing. He said, "Will you pray with me"? They in essence said, "Absolutely, we got you covered." So, Jesus said, "I'm going to pray over here. You stay here and pray." And they said, "Okay." And Jesus went away and He prayed and poured His heart out to God.

Then He came back and He found His disciples asleep. Can you imagine the disappointment He must have experienced? Again, I had never thought about the fact that Jesus would understand disappointment and betrayal and we deal with that every day, moms deal with disappointment. I remember one time my husband called me as he was getting ready to come home from work and he said, "Do you need anything? I'm getting ready to leave the office." I said, "Yes." I'd had a heck of a day and I'd been trying to figure out what was going to have for dinner. So, I said, "I figured it out, but I need more milk." He said, "Okay, I'll stop and pick up milk." Well, 30 minutes later, the man walks through the door, empty handed. Now he drove by three grocery stores on the way home, but he had no milk. Now at that moment, "Mark, where's the milk?" "Oh my gosh. I got a phone call before I left and I got distracted and I forgot it." And I quickly said, "You have screwed up my plan for cereal for dinner."

But the reality is there are moments like that, that we experience disappointment. Somebody lets us down, they promise they'll do something, our child doesn't behave right in public, our husband forgets to pick up the milk or the dry cleaning or something he said he would do. And quite frankly, my actions disappoint him as well and never had I considered that Jesus would understand what that disappointment feels like and that I could A: talk to Him about it and B; learn from how He handled those things. Jesus handled disappointment and betrayal with forgiveness. One of the things I've really come to understand, and especially in my journey to understand Jesus's experience on this earth, my relationship with Him, is that I honestly had to face something several years ago I didn't even realize I was doing. You see, I was putting my value and my self-worth in my children's behavior.

That's a really dangerous thing to do because what happens is when we put our value and our self-worth in our children's behavior, we're yanked around all over the place, because their behavior's good and then it's not so good and then they throw a temper tantrum in the middle of Walmart or your teenager makes a poor choice. If all of that defines you, then that's what I believe the Bible talks about building our life on sinking sand and we need to be defined by Jesus Christ because He's the same yesterday today and tomorrow, He never changes. That is building our life on a solid rock.

Dr. James Dobson: I've written about that at some length because I see it as a major problem with parenting and it's in some cases inevitable and it can be exacerbated by the Scripture that says, and it's in Proverbs, "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he's old, he will not depart from it." That sets you up if you accept that as an inevitability, that sets you up for taking the blame for everything your son or daughter does. Because if I had trained them up properly, this wouldn't be happening. And somehow their sin and their failure to carry the responsibility that they ought to, the wrong things they do are an outgrowth of the fact that I have failed as a parent. Now the Scripture does not mean that, I am absolutely convinced of it.

Jill Savage: I agree.

Dr. James Dobson: Because that Scripture is a Proverb and the Proverbs are not promises. You just read the Proverbs and see if you can make them into promises. Those who are lazy, don't eat. Well, sometimes lazy people do quite well economically so they're not promises, they're probabilities. This is the way it usually works. It usually works that if you raise your children properly, they're going to turn out right. But it's not inevitable and it's wrong for a parent to take that blame on themselves for everything bad that happens. I want to tell you something else, it's just about as foolish to take all credit for when they do things right.

Jill Savage: Well, yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Because that may not have been your idea too. Really the best explanation for that is Adam and Eve in the garden, they had a perfect environment. They had a God who was infinite and He was essentially the father to them and they still did wrong. They did not remain faithful to what God had told them to do. So, there you have an example of the father figure, the creator being disappointed in His first two creations and it wasn't His fault. I don't know if I can make that understood, but that's a very important point.

Jill Savage: But we do tend, I think as a society, we define ourselves by the kind of car that we drive or we don't drive, by the neighborhood we live in or we don't live in, by the number on the scale, by whether our children are behaving, whether our children look good or don't look good. I mean, we all naturally... I think the human experience, if we aren't careful, we will get caught up in that. And when I realized I was doing that as a mom, here's what I realized, I was becoming a controlling mom, because I wanted to control my children's behavior so they would look good and behave good so I would look good. That is not the most effective parenting method. And it's not a godly way of doing things. We need to be separated from our child's behavior. That's why I say my value and self-worth needs to be based upon who I am in God's eyes and that's never going to change and I think that is so important for us as moms to understand.

Dr. James Dobson: Have you thought about the fact that the better parent you are and the more invested in your children you are and the more you care about how they

perform in school and do things, the more vulnerable you are to guilt? Guilt is greater for the good parent than the one who doesn't seem to care.

Jill Savage: I never thought about that.

Dr. James Dobson: That isn't always that way, but it can work that way. Well, I said at the end of the program last time that I'd like to have a few words with the men with regard to the role of the mom. We began the program on a fast pace and we haven't had a chance to even return to that. Dads are not irrelevant to all this. We're talking about moms and the frustrations they feel and the overwhelming responsibilities that come their way, but dads need to understand that. They need to read this book. I hope some of them are listening today and one of the experiences that Shirley and I had goes back to your feeling, Jill, that there was just too much to be done and you were very compulsive about it and that you couldn't go to bed until all the toys were put up in all those things.

We talked about it last time. Shirley was like that. Shirley wanted to be the world's best mother. And frankly, I think she came close to it, but she would be sitting on the floor, folding clothes after they had been washed at midnight. She needed her rest too. And we were both running like crazy. I was working on my PhD and I'd help when I could, but she was taking on much of this responsibility herself and frankly it was killing her. So, I managed to scrape together a little bit of money and arrange to have her get some help once in a while, maybe once a week and to take some of that pressure off of her. But my point is that I had to be sensitive to that. I had to understand what she was experiencing in order to take our family in that direction. I hope some other men who are listening does. Not everybody can afford that, I understand.

Jill Savage: Right and I was just thinking I'll speak to the part... We've never been able to afford that, but I will say my husband, I will sing his praises because when I am with piles of laundry and folding them, he steps right in there and folds right along with me. I think that's another way that husbands can step in and help and recognize, help carry some of that load of filling the dishwasher, emptying the dishwasher, changing diapers. My husband and I talk a lot on marriage. We do marriage retreats together at churches and stuff and one of the things that we will talk about is honestly, the man that could do no wrong before we had children could do no right after we had children because my perfectionistic tendencies, everything that he did, I either redid or I complained about or criticized. I really had to come to grips where my critical spirit was actually keeping him from being able to be that partner.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, our time is gone. The title of the book is *Real Moms... Real Jesus, Meet the Friend Who Understands*. I know He does, Jill. He does understand, but put it into words in closing here for the woman who's out there. Does Jesus really understand when you're exhausted and when you've tried so hard and things still don't go quite right? What did you experience in your quiet times if you had them by interacting with Jesus?

Jill Savage: Well, you know what, as I really began to look at those human experiences, the years that He lived on this earth, the people issues that He had to deal with, the physical issues that He had to deal with, pain, weariness, needing to rest, needing to set boundaries. I really have come to understand how much He understands us and how much of a disservice I was doing really in my relationship with Him, not understanding that. And the more I've understood that the closer I've gotten to Him and I've realized that, you know what, you can't be a perfect parent, but you can partner with a perfect God. I think that that is the essence of what I hope moms begin to understand with *Real Moms... Real Jesus*.

Dr. James Dobson: Thank you for being our guest on these two days-

Jill Savage: Thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: It's a pleasure talking to you. You have a very unique book. I don't think anybody's written on this subject in just the same way. You have another book that I had hoped to get to, and I'd like to invite you back to talk about it called *Living With Less So Your Family Has More*, and this has to do with the decision that you and your husband made in your family to give priority to the kids instead of trying to earn more so you could buy more and it was not an easy thing for you to do, but you describe it in this book and we'll talk about it the next time you're here.

Jill Savage: I'd love it.

Roger Marsh: Jill Savage is an amazing godly woman who has dedicated her life to ministering to her family and to others. You've been listening to Family Talk and you've just heard the conclusion of our host, Dr. James Dobson's conversation with Jill Savage on the topic that was the theme of her 2009 book, *Real Moms... Real Jesus*. Now, if you missed yesterday's program, which was the first half of their discussion, remember that you can find that by visiting drjamesdobson.org and clicking on the tab marked broadcasts. That's drjamesdobson.org, and then click the broadcasts tab. Or give us a call at (877) 732-6825. We are always happy to answer your questions about Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute and we have team members available 24/7 to answer your call. So really don't hesitate, call us at (877) 732-6825. And remember when you're on the line with us, you can also request a CD copy of today's and yesterday's conversation to keep, or to share with someone who could really use that encouragement. So, call (877) 732-6825 today.

Now, since this interview was recorded, Jill Savage and her husband Mark have become empty nesters. In fact, Jill's most recent book is called *Empty Nest, Full Life*. If you or someone you love is having a hard time getting used to the empty nest, I'm sure that this book will be a blessing. You can find information about Jill Savage and all of her books when you visit drjamesdobson.org and select the broadcasts tab.

Well, that brings us to the conclusion of today's installment of Family Talk and the end of National Day of Prayer week here on the program. But just because the National Day of Prayer was yesterday, that doesn't mean there still isn't a need for fervent supplication on behalf of our nation. In his March newsletter, Dr. Dobson wrote the following, "This is a critical time for prayer by people of faith. Let's join together with a united voice in asking the God whom we serve to lead and guide us in these perilous times. Nothing will happen that is not permitted by him." Amen. Well, I'm Roger Marsh thanking you for making Family Talk a part of your day today. For Dr. Dobson, his wife Shirley, and all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, God's richest blessings to you and your family today and always.

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

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hi everyone, this is Dr. Tim Clinton for Family Talk. Where do you go to receive support and advice for your family? We interact with thousands of people every day through our Facebook page. There, you're going to find inspiring advice on what matters most to you, whether it's marriage or parenting, you can be sure our profile will keep you updated with how your family can succeed. Visit us at [Facebook.com/drjamesdobsonsfamilytalk](https://www.facebook.com/drjamesdobsonsfamilytalk). Each day you're going to find our latest broadcast, helpful resources, inspirational pictures and quotes, nowhere else are you're going to be able to start your day with a thought from Dr. Dobson, as well as a special message before you go to sleep. Remember, you can be sure that every post on our page is created with you and your family in mind. Take time to visit us and become a part of our online community on Facebook, will you? Simply go to [Facebook.com/drjamesdobsonsfamilytalk](https://www.facebook.com/drjamesdobsonsfamilytalk).