



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Reflecting God's Love Story in Your Marriage – Part 2

**Guest(s):** Al and Jo Ann Janssen & Kurt and Olivia Bruner

**Air Date:** June 14, 2022

[Listen to the broadcast](#)

**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.

**Dr. Tim Clinton:** Well, hello and welcome to Family Talk. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host of Family Talk and president of the American Association of Christian Counselors. I also serve as resident authority on mental health and relationships here at the James Dobson Family Institute. At JDFI, we are dedicated to defending the biblical institution of marriage, the sanctity of human life and righteousness in culture.

Before I introduce you to Dr. Dobson's guest today, I have a very special announcement. I'd like to invite you right now to partner with the James Dobson Family Institute. Thanks to some gracious friends of the ministry throughout the entire month of June, we have been blessed with a matching grant. That means every financial gift given to Family Talk in June will be doubled. Your donation of any amount will have twice the impact on strengthening marriages, families, and fighting for biblical truth.

To give today, visit [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). That's [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org), or call us toll free (877) 732-6825. And I'll be back at the end of the program to give you a reminder of this information. Now let's get into today's edition of Family Talk, which is the second half of a great conversation that Dr. Dobson began yesterday on the topic of the covenant of marriage.

**Kurt Bruner:** It's a holy ordinance we entered into. It's a covenant. It's more than just a temporary partnership before God. God was in the midst of our marriage, and we made a promise. And it reflects the promise He made to Israel. If you remember the story, where God made a covenant with Israel, it was a one way covenant. Olivia made a one way promise to me, and I made a one way promise to her.

**Dr. Tim Clinton:** That was one of today's guests here on Family Talk, Kurt Bruner. What he said is absolutely correct. A successful marriage is built on the pillar of commitment to one another and to God. Today, we're continuing a classic Family Talk broadcast featuring Dr. Dobson and two devoted married couples, Kurt and Olivia Bruner, and Al and Jo Ann Janssen. Kurt Bruner is the founder and president of Drive

Faith Home. It's a ministry with a mission to create a culture of intentional families.

Olivia Bruner serves on the Drive Faith Home leadership team, and is co-host of the "It Starts Now" video curriculum for parents. Both of the Bruners are successful authors and speakers. In fact, Kurt co-authored three dystopian novels with Dr. Dobson called *Fatherless*, *Childless* and *Godless*.

Al and Jo Ann Janssen have been married for over 40 years and have provided helpful assistance and insights to numerous ministries. Al is the author and co-author of over 32 books, including *Your Marriage Masterpiece*. That's the main topic of today's and yesterday's discussions. Al currently serves as an associate pastor at Holy Trinity Anglican Church in Colorado Springs. Today, the Janssens and Bruners will identify what it means to remain faithful in marriage. They'll also talk to couples in broken relationships that are in need of restoration. Listen to the second part of this program now on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's really get down to the details here. Let's suppose you're talking to a young mother who has got the couple of kids in the preschool years, and she's handling them pretty much on her own. She has realized now for the first time that the man she married is not who she thought he was. She thought he was disciplined. She thought he was caring. She thought he loved children. She thought he would spend money wisely. She thought that he was going to continue in a love relationship with her. And by love, I mean an emotional, caring relationship.

Olivia Bruner: And it's not happening.

Dr. James Dobson: Now it's not happening, and she's convinced it's never going to happen. And you talk to her about covenant marriage and she looks at you askance and says, "I have no idea what you mean."

Olivia Bruner: Well, you know what, Al addresses that in the book too, where he talks about the one-sided marriage. The person who feels like they're doing it on their own. And there's story after story, good friends of ours, where they entered into marriage just like that. And after a while, when she realized it's not happening, what she did instead was do her part. She did the right thing, even if he wasn't doing the right thing. She was responsible to him and she continued to do the right thing in the covenant marriage, because a lot of times in a covenant only one person's being the hero at a time.

Kurt Bruner: In the Scriptures, there's an example where God actually called someone to live in that kind of a marriage for His purposes, That, that person may have never understood. And that was Hosea.

Dr. James Dobson: Yes.

Kurt Bruner: You go marry a prostitute who will be unfaithful to you every day of your marriage. You're going to have to keep calling her back. You're going to have to keep buying her back from prostitution. Hosea, I doubt ever had a happy day of marriage in his entire life. But God had called him specifically to a purpose to tell a story that he had no idea he was part of. And I believe that occurs today.

Kurt Bruner: I believe our relationship to our spouse is an expression of worship in the relationship to the God that we serve. Seeing it that way brings you into the transcendent picture that's bigger than the daily grind. And it infuses meaning. You remember Victor Frankel, the psychiatrist?

Dr. James Dobson: Yes, yes.

Kurt Bruner: Who wrote the book *Man's Search For Meaning*. He was one who survived a concentration camp. And he made this observation, "those who sensed there was a purpose in their suffering survived. Those who didn't, went mad or died."

Dr. James Dobson: That concept is so foreign to who we are. It's almost unamerican to think of living in an unhappy relationship because it's the right thing to do. And yet that's what the Scriptures say, isn't it Jo Ann?

Jo Ann Janssen: Absolutely. And you got to believe it and you got to do it. And somewhere along the line, you know there's some deferred hope or joy, but-

Olivia Bruner: There is.

Jo Ann Janssen: And that's what keeps you going.

Al Janssen: I think one thing that I would add to that, is that a spouse who's feeling they're in a one sided relationship can do the right thing. Ephesians says, "As unto the Lord." So when my wife doesn't feel like fixing dinner and that's a little thing, but I come home and sometimes she'll say to me at night, I'll say, "Thank you for a wonderful meal." And she say, "Well, I really didn't feel like doing it." Well, if you're not getting a response back from your spouse, you can say, "Lord, this is for you." And I believe that's why this marriage picture is in Scripture, is that's what He wants us to see. That's what He wants us to experience.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. And there is an element of hope here that we are not talking about. I taught a Sunday school class of young married couples for 10 years or so. And I dealt with a lot of men and women during that time who were involved in infidelity and all kinds of difficulties. They'd fallen out of love with each other. And the amazing thing is about half of them not only survived, but actually fell in love with each other all over again.

Al Janssen: You can have it back.

Olivia Bruner: Good story.

Dr. James Dobson: That's right.

Olivia Bruner: And those are friends that I was talking about earlier. That's what's happened with them. It's been so neat. They've been married 40 years now. And he will say, "I was a jerk back then." He'll admit it. And he knows he was, but for about 12 years, he never said it. And she had to continue to be the hero in that relationship, not hearing it from him.

Al Janssen: And if she had left and she, from the American perspective, she was not happy. We know this couple as well. The world would've said she had every right to leave and follow her own desires. But today, this couple's a picture to both of us, that here's a beautiful picture, because she was a heroic in her love. And her husband rises up today and calls her blessed.

Dr. James Dobson: Kurt, we've talked about heroes several times here. What do you mean by that phrase?

Kurt Bruner: Well, I think this is the critical message of the book, but the critical message of what marriage is, all of what we've discussed so far, we never even have gotten into yet the passionate marriage. God's marriage is also a passionate marriage and there is the thrill and the excitement that comes with that. So it's not all stick to it whether you like it or not type of ... I think all of us around the table have had our wonderful times and our difficult times.

But all of this builds. And I think of it as a drama unfolding. And every great drama has some type of attention that has to be resolved and it needs a hero. Every great drama needs a hero. Well, all of the difficulty that we've talked about, all of the fact that God has an unfaithful spouse and the fact that God said, "And if you are unfaithful, I'll pay the price." Where does that point us? It points us to the ultimate hero of history and of our lives, Jesus Christ. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Who did what? Who gave up everything for us. The essence of being heroic is giving up yourself for someone else. Christ did it by giving His life. I may do it by biting my tongue when I know I'm right in the argument with Olivia.

Olivia Bruner: Now wait a minute here.

Dr. James Dobson: It would really be kind of fitting for us to all have a big fight right now.

Kurt Bruner: But it could be, it could go all the way to someone who spends their entire life as a spouse, like Hosea. Who's faithful, who gives love, who serves their part of the covenant and it never comes back. And it really never does until that moment on the other side, when they hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Now enter into the joy of your true marriage to me."

Al Janssen: I think marriage is really about over a lifetime learning to lose yourself and give up your selfishness. And there's no better place to learn that lesson than our

Lord said, "Of he who seeks to find life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." Marriage is the place to learn that.

Kurt Bruner: A thought that comes to mind for me, is when God got married to mankind, He knew He was marrying a fallen creature who would fail. I think back to, Al paints a beautiful picture in the book of the first marriage before the fall. What was it like for Adam and Eve? And he tells the story, but then comes the fall.

And the Scriptures say that when Eve was tempted and took the fruit, that Adam was right there with her. He wasn't off somewhere else. He was right there with her and he paints a picture of what would've happened had Adam been heroic at that moment, rather than going along. Could he have stood up and said, "Wait a minute, take my life instead of hers?" What might have happened if he was heroic? But he wasn't. He was a coward and husbands have been cowards ever since.

But that's the impact of the fall. And when that young lady or young man's getting married, recognize you're marrying a fallen person. And the covenant you're making is one way, whether it ever comes back to you or not.

Olivia Bruner: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: If he seems perfect, there's something wrong with him.

Olivia Bruner: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: Something wrong with the contract.

Kurt Bruner: There's only been one or two of those kind of husbands and Olivia got one of them.

Jo Ann Janssen: I got the other one. Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: We're talking about the book, *The Marriage Masterpiece: A Bold New Vision For Your Marriage*. This is not a how-to book.

Kurt Bruner: No, it isn't.

Dr. James Dobson: On marriage, is it?

Al Janssen: I think there will be helpful insights. I hope there will be, of how to apply it. But primarily it's about what is the meaning in my marriage and where is this heading? And why do I do the things that I need to do in my marriage to make it work?

Kurt Bruner: I was going to say that the how-to, there are many, many great how-to books.

Al Janssen: Absolutely.

Kurt Bruner: And when we went into this project, this was the idea. We don't need right now another how-to. We've got to remind the people of God what this is all about. Why marriage? What is marriage? And I would describe it as an inspirational book. You read this book and the passion ignites again of there's a purpose behind all of this. I'm not just trapped in the daily grind.

It's about something bigger than me. And therefore it infuses meaning in every part of life. Within that context, the how-to is critical. You know what, if you're in a fighting marriage as described here, you probably need *Love Must Be Tough* sometimes. You need the how-to of *Love Must Be Tough*. What do you do when there's a crisis? But if you don't have the commitment to know that it's about something bigger, why even go through the crisis? Why even be tough?

Dr. James Dobson: Kurt, this subtitle is interesting. You call it *A Bold New Vision For Your Marriage*. This is as old as mankind.

Kurt Bruner: Isn't that sad that we've had to call it new?

Dr. James Dobson: Are you saying that this is not being taught in the churches?

Kurt Bruner: Well, when we began brainstorming the concepts in this, we realized we can't find this anywhere. We can't find this information anywhere. Bits and pieces, but no one has painted the grand masterpiece in one Sistine Chapel, if you will, to let us see the whole thing and say, "Wow, that's what it's about." We all probably would say we believe this. We would all say that, "Yeah, I agree with that." But we haven't entered in and experienced it the way I think it's been painted here.

Dr. James Dobson: I tell you what, when it functions as designed, it's a wonderful thing. Shirley and I have had these 41 years and like everybody else, there have been more difficult years than others. There was the year Shirley broke her leg and Ryan was two years of age and I had to be Mr. Mom. And we were halfway through rebuilding a house and we were living in plaster dust. And so we had our-

Olivia Bruner: Yeah, that was a little stressful.

Dr. James Dobson: Our tough years, but never to the point of questioning for a second that we did the right thing. And I've said many times, I would not be sitting here, would not be doing what I'm doing, if it were not for the support and love and encouragement that Shirley gave me. She is the greatest gift to me that I have ever had.

Olivia Bruner: Amen.

Dr. James Dobson: And when you do enter into that kind of relationship, it is marvelous.

Al Janssen: Dr. Dobson, could I just say on top of that, that you and Shirley are a picture to Jo and me of what it should be like. And one of the things that I think is so important and the reason that I believe so passionately that Christians need to get this picture in their heads, is the world is looking and we have a message to give to the world. But many times, it's a message that's pictured not spoken. And for Jo and me, couples that have been married 50, 60, 70 years and have been faithful to the Lord are a tremendous inspiration to us.

Dr. James Dobson: And there are fewer and fewer out there.

Al Janssen: Unfortunately there are. Christian couples would see that, yes times are tough right now, we're going through a difficult period, but there's a beautiful picture that's being painted. And then later on, we'll see it. But not just us. Others will see it around us. I think of one couple that tremendous inspiration to us, for the last 15 years of their marriage before they passed away, she had Alzheimer's. And for the last eight or nine years, she pretty much couldn't communicate with her husband at all. And the way he loved her was such a picture to me of the beauty of love, and gave me an insight into what God is like. So, that's what the stakes are.

Dr. James Dobson: I know a family like that right now, where the husband is taking care of his wife who has Alzheimer's and he treats her like a queen, like an absolute queen. And she can give him very little back in return.

Olivia Bruner: Yes.

Kurt Bruner: I'm also sensitive to the listener who hears that and says, "If your mate can't, it's a little easier to be heroic than if your mate won't." They won't give back, even though they could. And Al does a beautiful job of pointing the hope that's even in that situation. It's not just a message to those who have the situations that are easy to handle.

Dr. James Dobson: Kurt, I think it's important to say right here, that we're not talking about trying to be a hero when your spouse is physically abusing you or having repeated affairs for which he or she is unrepentant. There are certain situations where you do need to practice tough love and perhaps even separate for a while, and get some help and then see if there's any possible way to reconcile or come back together.

I wrote about that of course in my book, *Love Must Be Tough*. Kurt, I don't think I've ever asked anybody to role play a prayer, a kind of a conversation with God before, but I'm going to ask you to do that now. And I'm probably going to put you on the spot just a little bit, but let's suppose you're in a loveless, passionless marriage, and that's been going on for 10 years and you want to do what's right. You want a covenant marriage and you get on your knees before the Lord. And what do you say to Him?

Kurt Bruner: God, first of all, I feel betrayed. I thought this was going to be better than it is. And I want to be honest with you about that. And I'm mad. I'm angry about it, but I have to believe and hold onto the fact that you've told me you're going to be faithful. And that you've called me to something bigger than what I'm living. And so what I'm going to ask you for is the grace every single day to live what you've called me to live. And I'm also going to believe, my hope comes in that whether it's in this life or if it's in the life to come, you're going to say to me, "Well done." You're going to smile. You're going to put your arm around me and you're going to say, "Now I'm going to show you what marriage is really about. Enter into my intimacy."

And I believe you're going to say to me, as you wipe my tears, "The moment when you most wanted to throw in the towel, that's the well done, good and faithful servant moment, because you didn't." And if I don't believe that, then I will throw in the towel. But I need your grace right now, because I'm mad at you. And I'm mad at my mate. You've got to sustain me.

Dr. James Dobson: I believe the Lord will honor that prayer too, don't you? You have tears in your eyes, Olivia.

Olivia Bruner: God's faithfulness has got to be a motivation for the reason we're faithful to our spouse. His faithfulness to us is a huge motivation, so that we can continue to be faithful to our spouse.

Dr. James Dobson: Jo Ann?

Jo Ann Janssen: I don't talk very good when I'm crying. That was beautiful, Kurt.

Dr. James Dobson: You realize we're talking to people who could pray that prayer.

Jo Ann Janssen: Yes, yes.

Al Janssen: Lots of people.

Jo Ann Janssen: That's exactly what hit me, because I know people that need to be praying that prayer on an hourly basis. And I know people that probably didn't pray that prayer and gave up and that's a disaster to me. That's a heartbreak.

Al Janssen: Thank God our Lord didn't give up in Gethsemane, because He prayed a prayer like that saying, "Lord, I don't want to go through this, but not my will, but thy will be done."

Dr. James Dobson: What we have to understand is that the Lord has neither called us to be happy or promised us that we would be happy. He has promised us to walk with us and there may be circumstances like you described with Hosea, where it is tough. It is difficult. And yet He will, I think honor the kind of prayer that you prayed, Kurt.



Kurt Bruner: I love the picture painted by J.R. Tolkien in his *Lord Of The Rings* book, where he has these characters who are going through a very terrible time and they're talking about stories and they realize they're in a story. And they say, "Sometimes the story you're chosen to be in is not the greatest part to play, but it's the best story to read." And I believe someday the story of every single marriage is going to be read and the best ones are the ones most people wish they were never in. But they were faithful and they were heroic, and that's what we're called to be

Dr. James Dobson: Al, give us a bottom line for your book.

Al Janssen: God has given us the model for marriage. And that model is Himself. He has experienced everything in His marriage that I believe we as human beings experience in our marriage. And despite pain, and disappointment, and anger, He has been faithful to His beloved. And His model and His picture are an inspiration to us and to me, to go the distance in our marriage.

Dr. James Dobson: The title of the book again is *The Marriage Masterpiece, A Bold New Vision For Your Marriage* by Al Janssen. Jo Ann, you played a role in this.

Jo Ann Janssen: I read every word, of every edition, of every thought. Yes. I keep reading it. It's an important book. I'm very touched that my husband wrote it.

Dr. James Dobson: And has your input in it as well.

Jo Ann Janssen: Oh, there's lots of Al and Jo Ann stories. Yes there is. There's a lot of input there.

Dr. James Dobson: Kurt Bruner, you have played a role in this book as well. You said you feel this is the most important book on marriage in the last decade or so.

Kurt Bruner: I do. I really do, because this is what we've forgotten and we need to be reminded.

Dr. James Dobson: Olivia, did you play a role in this book?

Olivia Bruner: I'm just married to Kurt.

Dr. James Dobson: And that's good enough.

Kurt Bruner: Talk about heroic.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, thank you all for being our guests. I'm sure we'll get a lot of interesting mail. I wouldn't be at all surprised if some of it didn't come from people who could have prayed the prayer that you prayed Kurt and that is the foundation. That's the basis. And anything short of that will not sustain you through the tough times. Blessings to you all. And I trust that the book will be a great success.

Al Janssen: Thank you.

Kurt Bruner: Thank you Dr. Dobson.

Jo Ann Janssen: Thank you.

Olivia Bruner: Thank you.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I'm Dr. Tim Clinton and you've been listening to an encouraging and important conversation here on Family Talk. I hope this two day discussion between Dr. Dobson, Kurt and Olivia Bruner and Al and Jo Ann Janssen has encouraged you. Hope you'll visit our broadcast page at [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). While you're there, you can find information about Al Janssen's book, *Your Marriage Masterpiece*. That's [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). Or call us toll free, (877) 732-6825.

Now Father's Day, is this coming weekend. At the JDFI, we love dads and we recognize the crucial role that fathers play in the life of their sons and daughters. To celebrate and honor fathers everywhere, we've created a valuable, easy to use resource just for them. It's called "Strong Dads." It's an email series. To sign up, just visit [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). This 10 day email series, which contains relevant resources from Dr. Dobson, it's all designed to help empower you to step into your role and calling as a dad. Would you like your home to improve drastically? Are you eager to see your children impacted by biblical principles? Well, then sign up for our "Strong Dad's" email series today by visiting [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org).

Today and the entire month is also a perfect time to give to the James Dobson Family Institute. Because of the generosity of a number of friends, we've been given a matching grant of \$300,000 for the month of June. That means your gift of any amount to the Dobson Family Institute or Family Talk, this month will be doubled. Your financial support allows us to help couples grow closer and enjoy deeper intimacy than they've experienced. We also encourage and equip families, parents to stay engaged with their kids and to help them grow into godly adults. To give and have your impact doubled visit [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) or call us toll free (877) 732-6825. But don't forget this matching grant is only available through the month of June. So I hope you'll give today.

You can also send your contribution through mail. Our address is the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, PO Box 39,000, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80949. As always thank you for your support of the James Dobson Family Institute. But most importantly, thank you for making us part of your day and sharing the program and ministry with your friends and family. I'm your co-host Dr. Tim Clinton. Please join us again next time for another encouraging biblical program right here on Family Talk.

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