



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Keep Your Love On – Part 1

Guest(s): Danny and Sheri Silk

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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: Have you ever felt like your marriage was on rocky ground or maybe you and your spouse just weren't connecting anymore or even struggling just to avoid conflict was all you had in common? Well, stick around, if that's your story. I promise that you will be glad you joined us for today's classic edition of Family Talk. Here now is Dr. Dobson to introduce today's guests.
- Dr. James Dobson: Today, we have, as our guests in the studio, Danny and Sheri Silk, to talk about building and maintaining healthy relationships. They talk about how you can create them and maintain them and recreate them when they've been damaged. So Danny and Sheri, with that introduction, let's begin. It's a pleasure to have the two of you here.
- Sheri Silk: Thanks for having us.
- Danny Silk: Unbelievable to be here.
- Sheri Silk: Such an honor.
- Dr. James Dobson: You have a master's degree in social work.
- Danny Silk: Yes, sir.
- Dr. James Dobson: And you got that from Cal State University in Sacramento, where you guys live, and you're the author of five books, I believe.
- Danny Silk: Yes, sir.
- Dr. James Dobson: Did Sheri co-author any of them?
- Danny Silk: She participated in all the stories throughout each of those books.

Dr. James Dobson: The stories. She lived them, didn't she? Well, the latest book is *Keep Your Love On*, and we need an explanation for that one. Sheri and Danny have been married 1984, and you have three grown children. As a matter of fact, I want to start by talking about marriage today. That is our theme, family life and marriage. In fact, Sheri, you were a pastor of family life at your church. What church is that?

Sheri Silk: It's Bethel Church in Redding, California.

Dr. James Dobson: And you were there for how many years?

Sheri Silk: We were there for...

Danny Silk: About 14 years.

Dr. James Dobson: You folks are deeply committed to the institution of marriage.

Sheri Silk: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Does it break your heart, Danny, what's happening to it?

Danny Silk: Yeah, I think the public image of marriage is really misrepresented. I think that there's a lot of successes going on. There's a great book called *The Good News About Marriage*, and it's written by a statistician. She heard this stat that says, "Half of all marriages end in divorce." And she started trying to find, "Where's that coming from?" And she traced this all the way back to the United States Census. That Bureau was trying to communicate that it's a projection, that, if things continued into the seventies as they were, we would end up with that. She said the closest it's ever been was like 34%, and it's generally more like 28%.

Dr. James Dobson: But even with that, some things are changing.

Danny Silk: Oh, for sure.

Dr. James Dobson: Marriage is deteriorating, and people are having difficulty in their relationships.

Danny Silk: It's one of the hardest things you'll do in your life, besides raise children.

Dr. James Dobson: You guys know that, don't you?

Danny Silk: We do.

Dr. James Dobson: From personal experience.

Danny Silk: We have a firsthand knowledge of this.

Sheri Silk: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: And you're willing to talk about that?

Danny Silk: Absolutely. It's part of our...

Dr. James Dobson: Now, everybody out there in the listening audience, pay attention here, because frequently, we have people who are representing a commitment to marriage and they tell everybody else how to do it. Shirley and I are among those that feel that way. I don't have all the answers, but we've made a good marriage. We're made for each other, but it doesn't always work that way. And as I have read the prep for today, getting acquainted with you guys, I think I read that a counselor or a psychologist told you, before you were married, that you shouldn't do it.

Danny Silk: Well, we found that...

Dr. James Dobson: Is that an overstatement? Or did that happen?

Danny Silk: Yeah. The Taylor-Johnson Compatibility Assessment, our pastor did that and then, reviewed it with us. Those were our two premarital counseling episodes. 12 years after we had been married, we were at his house, and we were bickering about something. And he throws his head back and says, "That reminds me of that Post-it note that was on your assessment. Remember that?" And I looked at Sheri, I looked back at him, said, "What Post-it note?" He goes, "The note that came back on your Taylor-Johnson Compatibility Assessment. Remember that?" "No, I don't remember that." "I didn't tell you about that?" "Tell us about what?" Now, both of us are leaning forward on our chair like, "Tell us about what, Bill?" And he goes, "Ah, that's weird." He says, "For 10 years, I sent that assessment in, and I would get it back. I would open it. I would go over it with a couple, back and forth for 10 years. I got yours back. I opened it, and there was a Post-it note. This is from a psychologist, that says, "Bill, do whatever you can to stop this marriage.""

Dr. James Dobson: No kidding.

Sheri Silk: But he never told us.

Danny Silk: I said, "No, Bill, you didn't tell me about that. There was no note."

Dr. James Dobson: He really owed it to you to let you know what you were getting into.

Danny Silk: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: What was there about your personalities that he considered incompatible?

Danny Silk: Just the measurements of those assessments, where you would come together in agreement and perspective or needs or affections or different things. Man,

we were just pegged, everywhere, we were pegged in the opposite direction. And we're very different people.

Sheri Silk: He used to describe us as, "I see Danny running backwards as fast as he can. I see Sheri running forward as fast as she can." We just had very different styles, that grew up in really hard family life, lots of divorce. And Danny and I share this, but between his mom and dad and my mom and dad and stepdad, who raised me, there was 15 marriages. That rolled into our what was normal. And even though we had gotten saved and were in church and all that, we lived this life of divorce and fighting. I have six brothers. And survival of the fittest was the deal. You just came out swinging or you're just going to die in that environment. And Danny was raised by a single mom, who was more passive and not a great communicator. So Danny learned a really passive communication style, and I learned a very aggressive one. So the two, those two together, not a good combo. And we worked it out, but it took years.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you fight a lot before you were married?

Sheri Silk: No, I don't remember... We only dated for three months and then, got engaged and then, got married three months later.

Danny Silk: There wasn't much time to fight.

Sheri Silk: There wasn't lots of time to fight.

Danny Silk: We did have a week on the houseboat that was given to us, the houseboat on the lake. And on the third day.

Sheri Silk: On our honeymoon.

Danny Silk: On our honeymoon, we came home. We had a whole week. We came home. We got off that lake, being trapped on that boat together, on the third day of our honeymoon.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you know how often that occurs? Do you know that the honeymoon is often a very unpleasant time of conflict and you learn things that, in all the dating experience, you had no idea of? So what did you do? Was the first year stormy?

Danny Silk: We got pregnant three months after our wedding and had a baby about a week from our first wedding anniversary.

Sheri Silk: Was the first year stormy? It was more like the first...

Danny Silk: 12 years.

Sheri Silk: I say 10, he says 12. I think we started getting better about 10 years in.

Dr. James Dobson: What kept you together, Sheri?

Sheri Silk: I think what helped me is I did not want to repeat what I saw in my family. I knew that we had to change. This was my watch for my family. This is whatever I'm doing right now is going to roll into the next generation with my kids. So we just stood the line. And when I was in trouble and felt isolated and hurt, I would purposely go to people I knew that would help me, not people I knew that would back up how I was feeling and give me an excuse to leave. So I chose to go to good counsel. I got lots of people in my life that helped me stay in the game. If you want to learn how to play basketball, you got to get on the court. You can't sit on the bench. So we just forged in and played the game.

Dr. James Dobson: You know what I call that?

Sheri Silk: What?

Dr. James Dobson: In skiing, you learn to ski by skiing. It's time on the mountain. And if you don't have any time on the mountain, you don't learn how to ski. And in marriage, you got to hang in there and learn how to do better what you're not doing so well. Were there times when you felt like it was over?

Sheri Silk: I think both of us felt trapped at times. Like "We're Christians, you're not supposed to get a divorce. What are we going to do?" We didn't talk about divorce ever. Every night, my parents were yelling at each other, "Let's just get a divorce."

Dr. James Dobson: Was alcohol involved?

Sheri Silk: In my parents?

Dr. James Dobson: Yes.

Sheri Silk: Yeah, all in my family, drugs and alcohol. And Danny, I remember him just being really depressed, just being sad and sitting by himself in the backyard.

Dr. James Dobson: What were you thinking, Danny?

Danny Silk: I was scared. I was scared that I had ruined my life. I was scared that this was never going to get any better and that we were never going to connect and that we were simply going to endure each other. So I did. I remember planning out, "What does it look like to have a divorced home? And how are we going to do all this?" And I planned it out in my head a hundred times, but I never believed that was the right thing to do.

Dr. James Dobson: So it was really your theology and your faith that kept you hanging in there?

Danny Silk: Oh, very much. I would have to ask the Lord to let me go, and he wasn't about to. And he surrounded me with amazing people, who I so respected their input in my life, that it caused me to humble myself again. "Danny, have you humbled yourself yet?" "Is there any other counsel besides that?"

Dr. James Dobson: Did you pray a lot during that time?

Danny Silk: Yeah, it was constant, because our disconnect and our tension was pretty regular. We had brief moments of connection, but most of the time, we were on guard with each other.

Dr. James Dobson: You've already said you were incompatible by your temperaments. Beyond that, why couldn't you make it work? Why were you in such turmoil with one another? Have you figured that out?

Danny Silk: Well, it's an ongoing growth area for us. I think, because we're so different, we need different things. But I remember, about 15 years into our marriage, Sheri went in for some counseling, and she came back. And I said, "So how'd it go?" And she said, "It was really good. I had discovered that I have never felt protected by you."

And I said, "By me? How did I get in on your counseling?" And I was so offended and just couldn't believe it, because I thought she was the bad guy and I was the victim most of our relationship. And it never dawned on me that protecting the bad guy is something you do. But it was because that was my grid was I had turned Sheri into the bad guy and I gave myself permission to not do my job as a husband. And so, when she would get upset or she would get angry, I would protect everybody around her. I had never even one time thought about protecting her in our relationship. As soon as my perspective changed from "I need to protect myself and other people from her" to "I need to move towards her. I need to hear her. I need to see her," everything began to change. Because her anxiety began to drop, and I got to see a different woman than I'd ever had up to that point.

Dr. James Dobson: We said earlier that your degree is in social work, so you will already know this, but many people do not know. I could have told you what the core problem was before you shared that. I asked the question already knowing, not because I'd read about you or know that, but because it is the standard conflict between a man and woman. That woman has this passion to be loved. It is her entire life to feel like this man values her, loves her, will fight for her, care for her, and that he's thankful for her. And if she doesn't feel that, there's this ache inside, right, Sheri?

Sheri Silk: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: And this great longing to be loved and cared for, it's put into a woman's spirit. I think it's part of God's design for a woman, that she needs to be cared for and

loved. The man usually doesn't have a clue about that. It's so foreign to how he thinks, that he doesn't get it at all. And like you, he doesn't think it has anything to do with him. "She's just mad all the time or depressed all the time or unhappy over something or other. I'm not responsible for her happiness." It's just a whole different way of life. And I've heard it a thousand times.

Danny Silk: Yeah, me too.

Dr. James Dobson: And we're talking to people right now, who are saying, "That applies to us. This is me. I've never felt that there was anybody that really cared for me. I have that ache inside." And the husband gets lost in his work, and he's finding satisfaction in being successful in his business, if he is. And if he's not, then he is got another problem. And he never recognizes that there are two parts to this equation. And we really can, with proper counseling, as apparently you all were getting snippets of, you were starting to recognize that "There's a formula here that can be handled better than we're doing it."

Danny Silk: I pinpoint that as the day that things turned around for us, was the day I got the revelation that it's my job to protect her. Every male I was ever around was a consumer or just very self-focused. Never strengthening the family, never investing. Once I got saved, I had these men in my life who were showing me. I just didn't close the gap, because they didn't have a wife like Sheri. They had these gentle, quiet, careful ladies, who seemed to be respecting their husband. I had a chair and a whip, and I had this lion.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that you, Sheri?

Sheri Silk: Your life would be so boring without me.

Danny Silk: Totally.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you ever try to explain this ache to Danny?

Sheri Silk: It took me a while to figure out what was going on inside me as well. I shared that I have lots of brothers and unsupervised time and a bunch of craziness going on in my family. And so, it was always my job to protect myself always. And because I have more of a dominant personality, it's loud. The way I would protect myself would be loud, yelling or carrying on or being upset. And so, he would distance himself from that, for good reason.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, that drive a man away, really.

Sheri Silk: And that would make me feel more alone and more up to me to protect myself and misunderstood. And then, you don't really know what I'm trying to say. And when he learned that it was his job to move towards me, I no longer had to be all upset anymore. I wasn't bringing that intensity to my conversation, to my needs, because he moved toward me. And so, there was two things going on. I

had to learn how to calm myself down and not attack and get in touch with what need I was having at the time and express myself. And he had to learn to not shrink back, but move toward me and partner with me.

Dr. James Dobson: I said Shirley and I have made it work and we've had an absolutely wonderful relationship. I love her today as much as I did or more than when I first married her. But we had to work through some of the things you're talking about. Shirley is a very sensitive woman, who has that need that I was talking about. She was everything socially that a woman could want in college. She was homecoming queen. She was most outstanding junior class girl. She had all the social success in the world. And went with her three years and didn't know till we got married that she had low self-esteem. Her father was an alcoholic. She'd never been loved by a man. She had an enormous capacity to be loved. So we had what I called the talk. It would be sometime during the first five years, where Shirley would begin to feel that I didn't love her enough and she would hurt. And it's often related to PMS, frankly.

I don't mean that in a funny way. I mean, for real, that she would feel, at that time, that she simply was not loved. We would talk till two o'clock in the morning and get it all talked out, and then, we'd be okay for six weeks or a month or however long. And we'd have the talk again. So all of that comes with getting to know the opposite sex and understanding how they're different from us and what they need. I would bet, Danny, that you needed some things from Sheri that she didn't know to give you.

Danny Silk: Yeah, and we still have the talk about those things as well. You're like, I need to feel admired. I need to feel respected and trusted. Probably most deeply, I need to feel trusted by her, that she would offer me that vulnerability that she was hiding with doing everything herself and taking care of herself. And so, I never had the opportunity to step into that place of feeling trusted by her, because she was doing my job, because I wasn't.

Dr. James Dobson: So in essence, your marriage was a blind date. You did not know each other at all, especially since you only went together for three months.

Danny Silk: And didn't have a clue really by seeing a similar dynamic as ours. Most of the couples that were around us were just classic, dominant male, more submissive, passive female. It seemed like it was everywhere. And whenever you saw a dominant female, it was headed for the rocks. It was a tough situation.

Dr. James Dobson: But I'll tell you something you now know, when the doors were closed, they were having the talk too. You can bet they were having the talk, because everybody has the talk.

Danny Silk: Everybody has to have the talk. I don't read your mind.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, we're off to a good start. Our time's almost gone. But these are some things that you all discovered together. We really do need to end by saying that you figured it out and you have a wonderful relationship now. Is that correct?

Sheri Silk: Yes. Yes, that's correct.

Dr. James Dobson: And you love each other?

Sheri Silk: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: And it's going to work?

Danny Silk: We think it's going to work.

Sheri Silk: Forever.

Danny Silk: There's hope.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, that's a little tentative, Danny.

Sheri Silk: I know.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you make it work. Shirley and I never gave each other the latitude to say it's not going to work. There was never a time when I said, "I don't think I can live with you. I don't think you're the one for me." Never, we never did that, because once you do that, you wound the other person. And then, it becomes harder to put it back together.

Danny Silk: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I hope that this conversation has been helpful to some couples that are going through the same things. I want to say to you all, in closing, that what you're experiencing, more than likely, is common to man and woman. And there are some time honored solutions. There are some ways to come to terms with it. There are ways to inform each other or understand each other better. And counseling with a person who really knows what they're doing can be very helpful. You mentioned Sheri going for counseling. Did you?

Danny Silk: We never actually spent much time in official counseling, as much as I was going through my master's degree and I was getting counseled, just by becoming more and more aware of me and people. And then, we just had some really great friends.

Sheri Silk: I did go to like a Bible study codependent kind of group for a year. I went every week, and they were just friends walking through life.

Dr. James Dobson: And that was helpful to you?

Sheri Silk: Mm-hmm. Very helpful.

Dr. James Dobson: Boy, I wish we had time to even discuss your book, *Keep Your Love On*. We've really got to get to that. And if you will be back with us, we'll start with that book and what it is you are saying to people along the lines of what we talked about.

Danny Silk: That'd be great.

Sheri Silk: That'd be great.

Dr. James Dobson: The book is available where?

Danny Silk: It's available online, Amazon, lovingonpurpose.com, anywhere you could get a book, go get it.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, thanks for being our guests and for being willing to let people see the unpleasant side of your relationship. You can't help somebody if you're not willing to talk about the issues that you have experienced and help them to come to terms with it. Blessings to you both.

Danny Silk: Thank you, Dr. Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: We will pick up right where we left off next time.

Roger Marsh: You've been listening to Danny and Sheri Silk today here on Family Talk. They've been sharing about their marriage with our own Dr. James Dobson. I'm Roger Marsh, and no matter what struggles you're facing in your marriage right now, know that there is hope in Christ. Today, the Silks offered encouragement and advice to help you and your spouse be happy and fulfilled in your marriage, and they have even more to share. So be sure to tune in again tomorrow for part two of this powerful conversation. Now, if your marriage is not where you want it to be, I've got a resource suggestion for you. It's the CD entitled "Becoming the Couple You Long to Be, and it's the production of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. In part one" of this two-part disc, you'll hear about things that can go wrong in a marriage and how seeking God's affirmation and wisdom from older married couples can really turn a marriage around.

Then, in part two, you'll learn about the keys to a successful marriage and how important it is to find your worth in Christ. Just visit DrJamesDobson.org. Select the Resources tab and then, Store to get your copy of *Becoming the Couple You Long to Be*. We'll send you the CD as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount, in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute today. Go to DrJamesDobson.org, hit the Resources tab, and then select Store. Well, that's all the time we have for today's edition of Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love. I'm Roger Marsh, inviting you 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.