



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: He Calls You Beautiful: Hearing the Voice of Jesus in the Song of Songs

Guest(s): Dee Brestin

Air Date: January 10, 2024

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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: Welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Sometimes we all need a little reminder of how much God loves us and how beautiful and precious we are in His sight. Now today's classic presentation features guest speaker Dee Brestin as she addresses women in a Gatesville Texas prison. She shares with them God's message of love for each of them through the Song of Songs from the Bible. Here now is Dr. James Dobson to further introduce today's program right now on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Today, we are going to hear a discussion of the book Song of Solomon or some people call it Song of Songs. And of course it's a book in the Bible. Many people believe that this book solely deals with intimacy and romance between a husband and a wife. Through this program, you're going to hear why King Solomon's words also serve as an example of God's love for us.

Our guest today is international speaker and popular author, Mrs. Dee Brestin. If you've been listening to me for a long time, you know that this woman is a great friend to Shirley and me. For nearly 30 years, she's encouraged and challenged women to discover and experience the deeper intimacy with Jesus. Dee has authored several books, most notably *The Friendships of Women*, and I understand that book has sold millions of copies to date. She has also written over 20 Bible studies for women. Today, you're going to hear a speech about one of those studies titled *He Calls You Beautiful*. Dee will explore the many ways God shows us His love and why we are precious in His sight. The audio you're about to hear is from a lesson given at a women's prison in Gatesville, Texas. At the end of the program, a few of the prisoners will share their experience through this study. Now, here is Dee Brestin on this edition of Family Talk.

Dee Brestin: Every time I come here, every time I have the privilege of being with you, I feel the breath of God on the back of my neck. The most alive church I know is right here in the faith dorms of prisons. And I want to tell you about the first time I spoke on the Song of Songs in a prison. I live in Wisconsin and I was going to be

speaking in a Milwaukee prison where I'd been many times and I was praying, "Lord, what should I share with these women?" And I just really felt Him impress the Song of Songs and I thought, "Really, Lord? But you told me to do it." So I said, "Okay, I'm going to do it." But as I'm driving to Milwaukee, I think, "What are you thinking, Dee? They're going to go back to their cells after I speak and they're going to read verses like, 'My beloved is like a sachet of myrrh between my breasts' and think, what was that lady talking about? How in the world does this have to do with Jesus?"

And I was losing my courage. But what I have often found is that God does lead me the first time and then the enemy comes in and says, "What are you thinking? It's not going to work." So I thought, "Okay, Lord, I'm going with this." And so I came in and I told them, "I want to teach to you tonight from a little known book in the Bible. It's called the Song of Solomon or the Song of Songs." And I like the Song of Songs because that means the best song of all, like Lord of Lords and King of Kings and what is the best song of all? It's the song of the love of Jesus for His bride. I said, it is a great Cinderella story and it is a story of an earthly courtship and wedding and marriage and after the marriage. But it is so much more than that. It is a great Cinderella story of a shepherd king who falls in love with a peasant woman who works in the vineyards.

She can hardly believe that this king is attracted to her and she doesn't feel attractive. She is working outside in the hot vineyards of Israel, which is a lot like working outside in Texas I'm sure. And she is sticky from the grape juice. She is sweaty and back then it wasn't considered beautiful to get a sun tan. And so the first thing she says to this shepherd King, so she's very aware of how she appears, she says, "Do not gaze at me because I am dark because the sun has looked upon me. My mother's sons were angry with me and they made me a keeper of the vineyard, but my own vineyard I have not kept."

What is so interesting in the song is she keeps referring to herself as a vineyard, which is a pretty odd way for a woman to talk about herself unless you realize that God's people in the Old Testament are often described as a vineyard. In Isaiah, it says, "My beloved had a vineyard and he cared for it and he cleared it of stones and he watered it, but she only yielded bitter grapes." But in the Song of Songs in the beginning, she is very ashamed of her vineyard. But as she begins to respond to the love of this shepherd king, her vineyard begins to bear fruit until by the end of the song she says, "Let's go into the vineyard and see the fruit," because that's what happens. As Jesus said, "If you abide in me and I abide in you, you will bear much fruit."

But she is very self-conscious and she says, "Don't gaze at me." Because you know when you come into the presence of somebody wonderful, you're suddenly aware of your unworthiness. Like when Isaiah came into the presence of the Lord, he said, "Woe is me, I'm a man of unclean lips." And that's how she is feeling. But you know what he says to her? He says, "You are beautiful, my love. There is no flaw in you." And as I was teaching this in the Milwaukee prison, a woman right next to me named Julia started to cry and I didn't want to

draw a lot of attention to her. So I just kept teaching and I said, "Actually, this is a theme of the Song of Songs. She feels unworthy, but he keeps reassuring, 'You are beautiful, my love,' over and over again."

Now, Julia is sobbing so hard that I can't ignore her anymore. So I finally said, "Julia, do you want to share what's going on?" She said, "I do." And she came and she said, "All of my life I wanted somebody to tell me that they loved me and that I was beautiful to them. For whatever reason, it didn't happen when I was growing up, but I remember thinking, when I get old enough, I'm going to get men to say it to me and I will do whatever if they will just tell me I'm beautiful." She said, "That's what got me in here. They told me that, but they didn't mean it. They were just using me." She said, "And before I was incarcerated, I looked in the mirror and I said, 'I hate you. I hate you. I hate you. You are ugly.'" She said, "But then through this ministry, Jesus found me and showed me that I was valuable to Him and that He loved me."

She said, "This morning I was walking on this little track they have for the women to get exercise and I said to the Lord, 'Lord, you are so beautiful.' And I thought, He said, 'Julia, you are beautiful.' And I stopped and I said, 'Say it again,' but it was quiet." She said, "And then tonight you come in and you open the Bible and He says, He keeps saying to you, 'You are beautiful my love.'" She said, "Oh, He said it again." And oh, we were all sobbing and I said, "Julia, you have just been kissed by the King in fact." Amen.

We had all been kissed. We felt His breath on our neck. And it is just so amazing to understand we've all blown it so much. We look at ourselves, we look at our past. I look at my past. I look at how I fail him every day, but He looks at me and I am beautiful to Him because I'm wearing the righteous robe that He has given me when I put my trust in Him. So right then and there, we decided the name of this book had to be, *He Calls You Beautiful*.

Now, there are two levels in the Song of Songs. It is indeed about marriage and it can teach us so many important lessons about the importance of purity and covenant and fidelity and passion that are important in a marriage. But we can't stop there. There's way more going on. Every single book in the Bible has Jesus hidden in it. Every single book in the Bible is about God and His people. Do we really think that the Song of Songs, the best song of all isn't about Him? It is about Him. And in Ephesians 5, we are told marriage is a mystery, but it points to a deeper mystery. When a husband lays down his life for his wife and lives sacrificially, he becomes a dim foreshadowing of the one who laid down his life for his bride. And when a wife honors her husband, submits to him, fits in with his plans and responds to him, she becomes a foreshadowing of the bride of Christ who does that with Jesus.

And it is very beautiful to see all the metaphors that God gives us to show us Christianity is not rules but relationship. He says He is the shepherd who cares for His sheep. He is the friend who is closer than a brother. He is the father who cherishes His child, but the most intimate of all, "I am the bridegroom who

rejoices over His bride." Amen. Now, I know that for many of you, this metaphor can be hard because for many of you, you haven't known the love of a husband who cherished you. Instead of tender names, you've been called terrible names. Instead of faithfulness, he may have been with other women or walked out on you and your kids. Instead of integrity, he may have lured you into trouble, into drugs or stealing or prostitution. So you may have trouble with this, but I want you to know that even if God never gives you a prince charming, even if he never turns your man into a prince charming, you have a Prince who is real. Amen.

And the book of Revelation says, "He is coming for us on a white horse, and He is going to do battle with the enemies of His bride because He rejoices over you. You are His treasure and He loves you." And I want to give you an overview of the song by going through the three love stages that we see in the song. You can see them in earthly marriage, but you can also see them in our relationship with the Lord. And I'm going to use my relationship with my husband to give you this picture. The very first stage is the first love stage. That wonderful euphoric time when you're falling in love and you're just walking on cloud nine.

I remember when I was falling in love with my husband, Steve, and I would wake up in the morning and there's that few minutes before you're not quite awake, but you kind of know if something good or bad is going on. And I'd wake up and I'd think, "Something good is going on, what is it?" And then I'd remember, it's Steve. This amazing man is interested in me and I am going to see him today and hear his voice. Well, never in my wildest imagination did I think I would have those feelings after I surrendered to Christ, but I did. I remember waking up in the morning and thinking, "Something's different. Something's really good. What is it? It's Jesus and He's real, and He may intervene in my day and I could hardly wait to get into His word because He might speak to me." That is the first love stage.

Now, the second stage is the wilderness. And the wilderness is when you are disappointed in your bridegroom. He's not quite what you thought and you begin to back up a bit from him. The wilderness isn't so much about difficult circumstances, but about your attitude toward your bridegroom. And after Steve and I were married, I always thought a husband was supposed to fix all his wife's problems and fill up the emptiness in her, but he wasn't doing it. I can remember saying to Steve, "You are not meeting my needs." And he said, "What are your needs?" I said, "Well, you should be able to figure that out." I was so difficult. And I was disappointed that that emptiness in me was not being filled by marriage. Because it can't be filled by marriage, it can only be filled by Jesus, but I didn't know that yet.

Well, in the same way after I came to know Jesus, at first it was just honeymoon, honeymoon and then I faced a real problem and I knew Jesus could just snap His fingers and make that problem go away, but He didn't. He made me sit in my problem and I thought, "Is this what I've signed up for? Are you not going to come running when I get the flu? Are you not going to come running

when I have money troubles? Are you not going to help me and fix this? You can do anything. You made the stars, you made everything." And I was confused. But if you hang on, if you learn the lessons you're supposed to learn in the wilderness, and instead of backing up from Him, move in closer, one day as the Song of Song says, "You'll be coming out of the wilderness leaning on your beloved." Because the purpose of the wilderness is to show you that what you really need is Him. And so that is where the Song of Songs goes with these three love stages.

So let's go through these three love stages with the Song of Songs. It opens with the Shulamite maiden saying, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." What is it about a first kiss on an earthly level that is so special? I can remember when Steve and I became friends, I thought, "Are we just friends? Is this just going to be a friendship?" And then came the night he kissed me and I thought, "We are more than friends." And what a kiss from the king is can be many things, but it's when you sense that connection with the Lord. It could be when a verse becomes radioactive to you know He is talking to you. It could be the sense of His presence. It could be an answer to prayer. It could be the sweetness we have in Christian fellowship together, but you sense that He's with you. You sense His breath on the back of your neck and you are being kissed.

Now on an earthly level, the way God designed marriage and sex is they're supposed to be some anticipation. There's some joy and anticipation. I've just been reading the book, *Miss Brenda and the Loveladies*, and she has what she calls a hallway house in Alabama for women getting out of prison. And she said, "For most of those women, sex was just expected right away with a man so there wasn't this sense of anticipation." And if that's been your experience, there is so much more out there by waiting. One of the themes in the Song of Songs is she keeps saying, "Don't awaken love until the time is right." Yes, because done rightly, sexual intimacy in marriage is like a beautiful flowing river that renews, that brings life. But if you do it differently, it is like that river has gone over the boundaries and is bringing floods and destruction and death.

So God is a good God who set boundaries for what He wants to protect. And one of the things that Saint John of the Cross said, "It is noteworthy that in the Song of Songs, the bride compares the bridegroom to a stag. She makes this comparison because of the swiftness of which he shows himself and then hides himself just like a deer." I live in Wisconsin and in the winter, deer are plentiful. But in the summer when the tourists are there, you cannot find them. You wouldn't think deer live there and God can be like that. He can appear and then He can hide. And I want Lisa to tell why that was meaningful and give an illustration from her life.

Lisa:

During the time that I was in Kentucky, well, actually, start back to the time I was incarcerated, I wrote my kids every day. Every week, I was sending them cards with my letters from... I mean, I basically kept a journal for my kids. In the parenting class, in the changes class, anytime that I could do some kind of

artwork, which they make you color in there a lot, I had all this stuff from my kids and I sent it off weekly. And never ever, ever did I hear back from them. I didn't get one letter. I didn't get one card. Nobody said, "Hey, the kids are fine." So it was discouraging.

But when I went to Kentucky, my son had taken me into his room and he's showing me all around and he's opening drawers and showing me this and this and that and that. And he has this folder and he opens it up and he is like, "Mom, didn't you make these for me?" And I had to look. And I was like, "Oh my gosh." Every card, every letter, every drawing, every coloring page that I'd ever sent him during my time of incarceration was in that folder. And I didn't think he had it, but it meant enough to him for him to save and have in his drawer, which meant everything to me because I thought maybe they weren't getting it or just that they weren't keeping it. But he kept them. And it's been five years and he still had them. So that was amazing.

Dee Brestin:

And just to make that illustrate this point, one of the things Saint John of the Cross says that He hides in order to test us and humble us and try us. And she kept persisting sending letters and pictures even though she wasn't getting a response. So you pass the test, Lisa. And then He leapt out when her son showed her this whole folder in order to encourage us. He does both for our good. So thank you, Lisa. That's so great. Lucy, would you come up please?

Lucy:

Okay. Two things stood out to me the most because like she said, the Lord of Lords and the King and Kings, because He is the Lord and He is the King. And the fact that the Song of Solomon is called the Song of Songs that I was like, "Oh, that has to be the song. There's something in there that I have to know because God wouldn't have put it in there if it wasn't." So right away, that opened my heart. I was like, "Okay, what do I got to learn here? Jesus, what do I got to learn?" So there I go. I read it, I read it, and I love the metaphors because it gives you a picture of God and how He loves us, how He's our shepherd, how He protects us, how He's our friend and holds nothing from us and gives us everything that is His. How we are His children, and He loves us and disciplines us. And then the bridegroom that rejoices over us.

And then the question I asked, she asked next, she goes, "Explain how each of the above metaphors is an escalation in intimacy." I was like, "Okay." I'm sitting there on my bunk and I'm just thinking, "Okay, how it did escalate." And I'm like, "Okay." And I'm picturing all of these metaphors in my mind and I'm like, "Okay, well, I've never been married. I've never walked down the aisle. I never wore a dress, but I could imagine it." I closed my eyes how I would feel wearing the dress, walking down the aisle. I'm shaking right now, walking down the aisle and seeing the person that I'm going to be with forever, holding him, loving him, and he loves me the same. And I could picture the butterflies that I would feel. And of course, every woman's going to feel that day on her wedding day. It's our wedding day. It's a special day, and it is just something that we can relate to, we can visualize. But then I thought, God doesn't just see us like that on our wedding day. He sees us that every day.

And at that moment, I was just like, "Oh God, He loves us. He loves us so much that He gets butterflies every time He sees us. He doesn't look at our past. He looks at our heart and He sees the beautiful in all of us." And I just love that metaphor the most because we can visualize it and we can all imagine how we're going to feel on our wedding day. And even if we had a bad wedding day or a bad marriage, we could visualize that good marriage with Him. And that's what I did, and I love that.

Roger Marsh:

Well, what a beautiful presentation given by author and speaker, Dee Brestin, today here on Family Talk. If you'd like to learn more about Dee or listen again to today's program, simply visit our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And remember, our 2023 Broadcast Collection is an excellent resource to add to your home library. It's available either as a five disc CD set or a digital download. And to get yours, all you have to do is go to drjamesdobson.org/2023. We'll be happy to send it to you as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute today. Again, go to drjamesdobson.org/2023 and all the information you need will be right there on the page.

I'm Roger Marsh thanking you for making us a part of your day. I pray that God continues to bless you and your family as you continue to grow stronger and deeper in your relationship with him.

Announcer:

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