



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Mom Strong - Part 2

Guest(s): Heidi St. John

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- Dr. 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.
- Heidi St. John: When I feel afraid, I will say to the Lord, "Lord, I don't even have the want to right now. I don't want to be a better mother. I don't want to be a better wife. I don't want to be more involved in the lives of my kids. I want to run away. I want to do my own thing. I want to pursue a different path." But you know in your heart that God's saying, "Uh-uh, this is what I've given you to do right now. These beautiful children that really belong to me."
- Roger Marsh: What an incredibly vulnerable statement by Heidi St. John, the homeschool mother of seven children and our guest today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. It's that kind of vulnerability that has truly endeared Heidi St. John to millions of moms across the country. She's written several books, including Becoming MomStrong, Prayers for the Battlefield, and Bible Promises for Moms. In addition, over 1 million people listen to her Off The Bench Podcast each and every month.
- Roger Marsh: But it's her willingness to be real, to share her struggles that resonates so deeply with other Christian mothers. When a mom feels burdened by her brokenness, her scars, and even the feeling that there's a sense of inadequacy, Heidi St. John reminds us that God's strength is made perfect in human weakness. Indeed, she urges women to find other Christian moms with whom they can be vulnerable, because, you know, the enemy loves an isolated target. Here now is part two of the conversation featuring our own Dr. Tim Clinton and Heidi St. John here on Family Talk.
- Dr. Tim Clinton: Heidi, welcome back. Great to have you to speak again, a word of hope and encouragement to moms out there everywhere. What a delightful conversation we had yesterday. Heidi, I was asking some people about you and why it seems like this MomStrong international voice that you have is exploding the way it is, and one of the comments that came back to me was because you're so vulnerable, you're so real with moms. They need that kind of conversation. That's what they want.

Heidi St. John: Well, I think we've, I grew up at least in a generation where I was told, "You don't air your dirty laundry." I remember my grandparents, actually, who I loved very much, when we were having really serious issues inside of our home, my grandparents were like, "You need anything at all, you talk to us." And it hurt me, in the long run, it really hurt me. And I feel like there's a beautiful thing that happens when we can say, "I don't actually have it all together."

Heidi St. John: A long time ago when I started blogging. I remember, I would be on Facebook years ago, before Facebook started censoring people. And when it was actually still fun, I said, "Hey, my husband's coming home from work. And he's telling me he's bringing the boss. And what should I make for dinner?" And so they told me, "Hey, do this." So, I get this recipe together. I put into my Crock-Pot. 4:00 in the afternoon, and I think, "My house should be smelling like chicken enchiladas and it doesn't." So, I got on the Facebook page and I was like, "You guys, here's the thing, I forgot to plug in my Crock-Pot. So, what can I make for dinner out of one can of olives and some tuna fish?"

Heidi St. John: And like, 1,000 people liked it. And I realized something at that moment. I told my husband later in the day, I said, "I think I'm figuring out how to really connect with these women. They're not interested in hearing me say I have it all together. They don't care when I say, 'Hey, this went really well for me. And here's a new laundry organizing plan and we're homeschooling our kids and we had a great day today.' No, they resonate with me when I say that I failed and we all struggle."

Heidi St. John: And when you can be real enough to say, "I'm struggling with this, this is hard on me. I don't have this all together. I'm not sure where to go." Women will come alongside and say, "Oh, well, what about this? And I tried that." But when you start acting like you're all that, basically what you've just done is shut down conversation. And I'm a huge fan of being real and audiences all over the world for the last 15 years heard me, pretty much there's nothing about Heidi St. John that you probably don't know, actually, if you just search the internet.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Heidi, yesterday, we touched on the issue of being tired, maybe feeling inadequate. And a word that was kind of a theme was anxious. A lot of people want to have those conversations because there's no one really to talk to. And they need somebody to address this, because it is so challenging. It's overwhelming. And at the end of the day, everybody wants to do a good job and they want to know that everything's going to be okay for their kids.

Heidi St. John: Yeah. Well, I think it's important that you find your people. There's a lot of anxious things happening in the world around us right now. All I got to do is turn on the news. But actually for the love, just don't turn on the news. How about we all just stop doing that. One of the things that I have been encouraging women to do for a very long time is to find your people, you got to find your people. And these are the people that you can be real with. These are the people you can cry with. This is the mom who... Long time ago, when I first started homeschooling, I called my own mom one morning. And I said, "I can't

do this anymore. I'm watching all the other moms in my cul-de-sac and they're going to... They're putting their kids on the school bus and that girl's in her workout clothes. And I saw another girl with her refillable Starbucks mug, and I just, no, no, no. That she's going to go get a cup of coffee by herself. And I can't even get a shower in relative peace."

Heidi St. John: And my mom said, "Do what normal people do and put your kids back in school and you can get your life back." And I knew, at that moment, she was not my person for that particular calling on my life. I knew I needed a mom that I could call and cry and say, "This is really hard." And she wouldn't encourage me to quit. But she might say, "Sounds like you need a mocha with extra whip, I'll be there in 10 minutes." When you find your tribe, when you find your people and you can be vulnerable with them.

Heidi St. John: And the culture tells you, "When it's hard, give up." This is what we see in marriage. This is what we see in parenting. And we've learned over time, Tim, you and I, for years and years of just walking this thing out, that if it's worth it, it's going to be hard and it's going to have its challenges. And there's something to be said for perseverance.

Heidi St. John: I always tell moms, "Perseverance is patience in action." And some of the moms listening to this right now, maybe the approach that... You're coming in on the wrong runway, maybe you need to switch to the other runway and give it another shot.

Dr. Tim Clinton: My daughter, Megan, walked up to the podium at a woman's conference my wife Julie was leading and we introduced Olivia, our granddaughter, papa girl Olivia.

Heidi St. John: I love that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And Megan said, "I'd love to tell you that... Have her sing Jesus Loves Me, but I'm sure she'd probably go ahead and sing Let It Go or something like that." And the place went crazy. Megan's also the one who comes back and says, "Hey, dad, do you have a good resource that I can go to? I don't have the time to go into an in-depth heavy, forever, Bible study, but I'd love a resource just that I could just tap into to encourage me." Heidi, you have a brand new book out called Bible Promises for Moms, what I loved about it, topics that moms struggle with every day, tell us what's behind it and what you hope to accomplish in her heart.

Heidi St. John: These are little pocket books. The reason I did it was basically because I had an episode in Walmart several years ago. It was a long time ago now. But one of my kids was throwing a fit. I'm sure no one can relate to that. One of the kids throwing a fit in the store. I was like, "Sit down." And she was like, "If I looked at this kid and I said sit down, she stood up. If I said it was green. She said it was blue." And here I'm thinking I was a pretty good mom up until that point.

Heidi St. John: I was thinking, I'd see other moms and their kids would throw fits in the store and I'd be like, "I have a parenting book that you should read." That was Heidi in her post-fifth child life. And I had wished that there had been a mother come up to me and said, "You know what? You're actually doing okay. You're doing okay. You're going to be okay."

Heidi St. John: So, Bible Promises for Moms is a very small book. It's a pocket-sized book. It's only like three bucks. I mean, you have probably the book in front of you, I don't, but I think it's like \$2.99. It's super inexpensive. The reason that we did it that way is because I told moms, "Buy five of these. And when you see a mom and she's at her wit's end and it looks like she can't do this anymore, just walk up, give it to her, say, 'You are doing a great job and you are loved and you're going to be okay and your kid's going to be okay.' And just hand it to her."

Heidi St. John: And maybe you hand it to her with a \$5 gift card for your favorite coffee shop in the area or whatever it is. Women all over the world have been doing that with that book. And it's really fun to watch. I hear stories all the time. One lady told me that she saw somebody in line at the airport, whose kids were throwing a fit, and she was getting ready to get on a cross-country flight. And I was like, "Oh, that's the worst." And this mom just walked right up to her and said, "I got something for you. And by the way, you're doing a great job."

Heidi St. John: And she said she just started crying. Why can't we just encourage each other? Why can't we just say, "Wow, that looks rough. You look like you need a mocha right now, stat, I'll be right back." So, I feel like there's a lot of hope and encouragement that can be found when moms link arms, and Bible Promises for Moms, that's exactly what it does. 80 topics on everything from adoption to abortion, to marriage, all kinds of topics. And there are some devotions for me sprinkled in and throughout it too. But it's just a great little book.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You're listening to Family Talk. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, your host. Our special guest today is Heidi St. John. She's a best-selling author, speaker, noted homeschool mother with a passion to affirm and empower moms in the Lord. It's been a delightful conversation, Heidi. I want to come back to this topic on Bible Promises for Moms. Heidi, yesterday we touched on this and we know that it's a challenge to be a mom. We know that it's tough just being a Christian in this world. And there's a lot of brokenness.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Some of us have come through some pretty difficult, painful paths than more. And we often pass on our pain. We love to think that our kids are immune to what we're going through, but nothing could be further from the truth, Heidi. So, stepping up and acknowledging what's going on inside of me so that I don't spill this over into my kids is really important. That's really an important gift, I'll call it, because our kids adjust to us. Our kids absorb us.

Dr. Tim Clinton: This isn't about piling on guilt or shame or anything like that. This is a word of encouragement to get strong and be healthy. And like you said, find your tribe and make sure you're working out these issues. And no one's going to be

perfect, but how we deal with and work through these issues, it's everything in our little family.

Heidi St. John: Well, and just keeping your eye on the horizon. Anybody that's read *Becoming MomStrong* or followed my speaking career for any length of time knows that I grew up in a very unhappy home, that was filled with domestic violence. It took me a long time to work through forgiveness. And sometimes, when you extend forgiveness, it's realizing that you're forgiving a person for an apology that you so desperately want, but you're probably never going to get.

Heidi St. John: And I knew that my dad was... Things that happened to him, he passed on to me. And I did not want to pass those on to my own children. And I can remember very clearly when my daughter was pregnant with her first. So, Noah would be, so it's eight years ago, when she was pregnant with her first child. Just flashing back to being pregnant with her and sitting in the classes that you go to, the ones where they lie to you, and tell you if you breathe a certain way, everything's going to be just fine. Those classes.

Heidi St. John: And I was sitting there at the end of the class, I just started crying. And I said, "I can't, I can't do this. I don't know anything about motherhood. My mom's unhappy. I think she didn't love being a mother." And Noah looked at me and she said, "Heidi, you don't know who you are." She said, "God's starting all over again. He's going to do... You don't know who you are in Christ." She prayed over me, put her hands on my belly. And Savannah was born about a week and a half later.

Heidi St. John: And so now fast forward, Savannah's in her 20s and she's going to have her first baby. And the Lord told me, "Your grandkids are going to live to see this generational sin in your family broken." And I used to teach childbirth education classes too, because why not? Pass on the trauma to somebody else. So, Savannah is in my bedroom and we hadn't yet heard her baby's heartbeat. And I had a Doppler at the house and I said, "Let's try to find, let's see if we can find your baby's heartbeat."

Heidi St. John: So, we waited and waited and searched and searched. And you know how it is when you hear that very, very first heartbeat. And there's Savannah just lying on the bed in my bedroom with me. And as soon as I heard it, just tears streaming down my face and the Lord's promise came true to me. He said, "I would live to see the next generation set free." And that's God's promise. That's what God does. It's his heart. And that's how he loves us.

Heidi St. John: And Savannah and her children, my children and Savannah's children now will not know that kind of pain, they'll know their own kind of pain. They're going to go through their own struggles in this world. But the Lord promised me, "Heidi, if you'll hang in there with me, you're going to live to see me do the miraculous." And he used motherhood in my life to say, "You know what? You can walk in forgiveness and then you'll find freedom." And moms need to hear that.

Heidi St. John: There are a lot of moms that come into motherhood right now that didn't see it modeled well for them. Or maybe, like me, they came from a home that was filled with domestic violence, or maybe they just had parents that were just checked out completely. Get off of Facebook and get into the lives of your children. They need you.

Heidi St. John: And more than that, God is going to do something in... If you'll let him, if you'll say, "Lord, I'm going to give this to you. My brokenness, my scars, my baggage, all of it, my inadequacies, every single piece of it." He will restore tenfold. And I have absolutely seen this now, as my children are starting to have children of their own. God is faithful and moms need to know it, because when the going gets tough and you feel like, "I just can't do this anymore." Keep your eyes on the horizon. God is still at work.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Heidi, I believe this. I believe every mom listening, every dad listening knows whether or not you're close with your son or daughter. Right now, you say their name, I'll say, "Megan," I'll say, "Zach." I know whether or not I'm close with Zach right now. And Heidi, there's something wired deep down inside of us. That calls us to that level of emotional connection. But there are a lot of barriers, like you were just referencing. Could be trauma, could be a struggle in a marriage, could be maybe a battle with depression.

Dr. Tim Clinton: There's so many things that work against our affection, our love for one another. You found your way here. I want you to stay with this for a moment and speak to mom, speak to her right now. She feels lost. She feels disconnected, but she's frantic, because she wants to be a good mother. She wants to create a safe place where she can engage in and her kids can flourish and grow. It doesn't have to be perfect, Heidi, but it's got to be something. And we got to start somewhere.

Heidi St. John: Well, I think you start with what we talked about, which is unless and until we can acknowledge where we're at. I mean, that was the beginning for me, was just acknowledging, "Wow, I'm a mess. I'm a mess. I feel like I'm failing at this thing." And then recognizing that God said, in his word, that he would work in that weakness. The weakness is not the problem, coming from a place of brokenness.

Heidi St. John: I talked to him on the other day, I was speaking at a conference and she came right over to me and she said, "I don't like my two year old. I don't want to be a mother of," she said, "I don't want to not like her." I said, "It's actually pretty normal to not like your kid every once in a while. Do you think that she likes you all the time? No. I mean, my kids were a lot like that with me."

Heidi St. John: I said, "That's not the point." What I often will pray for when I'm in moments of weakness, and my husband and I doing right now, just stepping out into some very unknown waters in our own lives. And when I feel afraid, I will say to the Lord, "Lord, I don't even have the want to right now. I don't want to be a better mother. I don't want to be a better wife. I don't want to be more involved in the

lives of my kids. I want to run away. I want to do my own thing. I want to pursue a different path." But you know in your heart that God's saying, "Uh-uh, this is what I've given you to do right now. These beautiful children that really belong to me. And I've given them to you for a little while."

Heidi St. John: So, I think you got to start with the want to. Lord, give me a want to. Lord, please, I don't know how to do this. Please, help me want to do it right. I think it starts there. For me, that's where the healing began and then realizing, "Okay, Lord, I'm going to ask you for the want to, and until I feel the want to, I'm going to do it because you said to do it." It's being honest with what's going on inside. You find somebody that you can be honest with. That's going to be that person, that sounding board, maybe it's your husband, maybe it's somebody from church.

Heidi St. John: If you don't have someone, can I just encourage you that might be something to pray for right away. You guys, this thing, the COVID situation that we're in has isolated people. And it has been devastating to relationships within families and within communities.

Heidi St. John: And I'm watching the adversary just have a heyday. And I'm like, "Hey, I just say, in the name of Jesus, we're not doing that." We're going to walk in right relationship with each other, because moms need other moms and bad days don't make bad moms. But the adversary wants you to think that it does. So, to come back to the beginning and say, "Lord, you gave me these children. And I may not always feel like I'm doing it right. And probably I'm not. There's going to be days when I'm absolutely doing it wrong. Help me get up again and not give up."

Heidi St. John: Anybody can start, but it takes a woman who's committed and full of perseverance and love for her children to finish well. And that's what we want, we want to finish well.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And there's nothing like the love of a mother. Heidi, my last conversation with my mom, she's in Altoona, Pennsylvania at the hospital, had suffered a massive heart attack, very concerned about her. They had her on blood thinner. She was struggling with her eyesight, because she was going blind. They wanted to back off on the blood thinner a little bit, so it didn't make her eyes so bad. And they did. And she had a catastrophic stroke right after that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: But the final moments, I was the last one with her. And I remember just having a brief conversation. She had some very personal words for me, I had no idea it was the last conversation. I remember kissing my mother and walking away and I turned to look back at her and she said, "I love you son." And I walked out of the room. I said, "I love you, mom."

Dr. Tim Clinton: The prayers of a godly, loving mother. There's no substitute for that. And to all the moms out there, we celebrate you. And it's such a delight to have this

conversation with you, Heidi, to learn more about your amazing ministry, the voice that God's given to you. Heidi, before you go, I've got to bring up something. We're flat out fight in time, but something big has happened in your life that we've got to talk about just for a moment.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Dr. Dobson, Franklin Graham and some others have been pushing a long time for Christians and conservatives to step up into the ring and run for office in their States. Heidi, evidently God has called you, because you've made a decision to run for Congress in your home state of Washington. Tell us a little bit about that and what that means on the road forward.

Heidi St. John: It's obviously a huge change for our family. It's a long story as to how we came to this decision as a family. We did not come to a lightly. All of our kids were in agreement. My husband, obviously, in agreement. So, it was a month's worth of crying, literally, and agonizing and a Jonah thing. Because I was like, "Oh no, I'm going to Tarshish. I'm not going over there."

Heidi St. John: And I've been telling women and men for a long, long time, my podcast is called Get Off The Bench. God calls Christians into every sphere of influence. We need to be in medicine. We need to be in education. We need to be in entertainment. And yes, we need to be in politics and forever and ever amen. The church has been telling Christians, "Oh no, we don't do politics." Except for politics determines policy.

Heidi St. John: And in Washington state, and many, many other places of the country are languishing under bad policy. And Christians have just relegated this. And the Bible teaches us that we are to be both salt and light. And when we realized that there was possibly an opportunity, I started getting phone calls and some kind of miraculous things happened.

Heidi St. John: So my husband and I began to pray about it. And I announced that I would be running for Congress on the last day of a women's conference that I was speaking at, where I was telling those women, "You guys, get off the bench and onto the battlefield." I had printed out a list of, I think, 30 openings that were coming up in our area, everything to city council, to the library board. You wonder why we have drag queens in our libraries? Because the library boards are allowing it.

Heidi St. John: Why are Christians not on library boards? Why are we not on the boards of the parks and rec in our areas? Christians need to be in those places. So, we had about 30 positions. I pass it out to the women, maybe 250 women there. And toward the end of that session, of that day, I said, "You guys, I really want to talk to you, put your phones in the middle of the table so I can tell that you're not recording me anymore. Put your hands in the air like you don't care, like do a little dance for me."

Heidi St. John: And I said, "I've decided to practice what I preach." And about the same time I said that, Oh my goodness, I couldn't even believe I was doing it. Standing ovation, 250 women on their feet saying, "We're going to help you." That's what needs to happen. The reason that people don't run for office, and frankly the reason it took me so long is I know what I'm up against, we have counted the cost.

Heidi St. John: The political conversation in this country is toxic and we're not talking about ideas anymore. We're just demonizing people. So, if we disagree, we go from disagreement to demonization very, very quickly. I would ask for prayers, for everyone who's listening to this. I've never run for office in my life. You guys, I was thinking about it the other day. I'm like, "Lord, why? Why me?" And the Lord was like, "Why not you?"

Heidi St. John: We are living in an Esther moment and there needs to be men and women of courage stepping up and saying, "I'm willing to be called in to the presence of the king and say, 'Lord, I'm going to walk in obedience to you.'" And really that's what this is about. I'm hoping that my run for Washington's 3rd congressional district is going to embolden and encourage other Christians to run for office. Whether it's the Senate or the Congress.

Heidi St. John: We live in a very unique country in the republic that we have here that was really designed for the citizens to participate in. And when ordinary citizens don't participate, you get lifelong career politicians who now we refer to as the elite, who end up acting more like kings and dictators. They're not listening to the people anymore. So, I'm going to learn a lot and we would covet your prayers. We know what we're up against, and we're already feeling it in a very acute way. So, we're hoping that God's people will rally behind us and we'll see what God does.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Heidi, it's been an amazing two day series with you, talking about moms. And on behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, their family, and the entire Family Talk team here, we salute you and know of our prayers on the road forward. Thanks for joining us.

Heidi St. John: Thank you.

Roger Marsh: You've been listening to Heidi St. John here on Family Talk. Author of the book Bible Promises for Mom. I'm Roger Marsh. And as we close, what an encouragement for weary moms to hear from a mother of seven children, that God is indeed faithful. When the going gets tough and you feel like you just can't do this mom thing anymore. Keep your eyes on the horizon. God is still at work.

Roger Marsh: And don't forget to check out Heidi's pocket-sized, 100-page book entitled Bible Promises for Moms. It offers scriptural counsel on 80 alphabetical topics for moms, ranging from depression to discipline, to wisdom and worry. To learn

more about Heidi St. John, or to hear any portion of the broadcast you might've missed either on today's program or yesterday's broadcast, please visit our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. There is so much information waiting for you on the broadcast page. You're definitely going to want to check it out.

Roger Marsh: Now here at Family Talk, of course, we know that parenting is not an easy task. That's why we have dedicated the entire month of March to providing moms and dads resources for their journey with their kids. And one of those resources is a classic from Dr. Dobson and his wife, Shirley, it's the daily devotional called Night Light for Parents. It's filled with encouraging insights and spiritual wisdom. And I'm sure the Dobsons supplied some of those practices when they were raising their own two kids.

Roger Marsh: Now, the book offers heartwarming stories and timeless biblical truth, along with practical parenting advice. And I'll tell you what, for a donation of \$20 or more to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we'll send you a copy of the book Night Light for Parents as our way of thanking you for that gift. So, go to drjamesdobson.org/nightlightforparents to get your copy today. That's drjamesdobson.org/nightlightforparents.

Roger Marsh: For all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks for making us a part of your day and be sure to join us again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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

Dr. Dobson: Hello, everyone. This is James Dobson inviting you to join us for our next edition of Family Talk. Every day, we come to these microphones with someone in mind, whether it's a busy mom looking for tips on discipline or a husband who wants to learn more about connecting with his wife. We want to put an arm around your family in any way that we can. So, join us next time for Family Talk, won't you?