



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Taking My Life Back – Part 2

Guest(s): Rebekah Gregory

Air Date: March 28, 2023

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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: Hello, everyone, and welcome back to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. And yesterday on the program, we heard how Rebekah Gregory survived the Boston Marathon bombings back in 2013. Today, we'll hear part two of her conversation with our own Dr. James Dobson and learn about her childhood and how she has moved forward to become the woman she is today.

Now, if you're not familiar with Rebekah's story, let me tell you a little bit about her. She lost one of her legs below the knee and has endured many surgeries due to the injury she suffered from the Boston Marathon bombings. Since then, she has drawn closer to God and launched the non-profit organization called Rebekah's Angels Foundation to help other children and families overcome trauma.

Rebekah is a speaker and an author of the book, *Taking My Life Back: My Story of Faith, Determination, and Surviving the Boston Marathon Bombing*. Rebekah and her husband Chris have two children, Ryleigh and Noah. Recently, Rebekah has finished having a few more surgeries and has been using a wheelchair while recovering. We hope you'll join all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute in praying for her continued healing as she journeys back to walking again in the near future.

Well, let's listen in right now to the conclusion of Dr. Dobson's conversation with Rebekah Gregory right here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Rebekah, the program we did together last time was so meaningful, and you articulated the things that you'd been through with this Boston Marathon bombing. But that's not the only trauma in your life. You really had a pretty tough childhood, didn't you?

Rebekah Gregory: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you mind talking about that?

Rebekah Gregory: No, I don't mind.

Dr. James Dobson: Because that kind of leads up to what you went through back in 2013.

Rebekah Gregory: Yeah. I think my whole life has just been a series of these sink or swim moments. And it started when my dad was very abusive, and he was also an evangelist who traveled all over the world preaching.

Dr. James Dobson: So you were a preacher's kid?

Rebekah Gregory: I was. So I would sit in the front row every Sunday and clap and cheer. And then, I would come home and behind closed doors, he was a totally different person. And the nights where he was out or the weeks that he was gone, I remember sitting on this one particular spot on the window sill, just praying to God that he wouldn't come home, because I was terrified that he was either going to kill me or my mom, too.

Dr. James Dobson: Did he beat you?

Rebekah Gregory: He did. Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: How else? Did he be verbally abusive?

Rebekah Gregory: He was very verbally abusive, so nothing was ever good enough for him. I remember at that time he would get mad if we didn't clean our plates. He would get mad if the TV was up too loud, if the cartoon was on that he didn't like. He got mad over everything, and so anything and everything really upset him.

Dr. James Dobson: He was not a drinker, was he?

Rebekah Gregory: No. He just had a really bad anger issue at that time. And then, later on I think he got into some other things. But my mom was very brave and very courageous, and ended up leaving that situation. But my sisters and I still had to go back and forth every other weekend and every Thursday to his house, and there were days where he would kind of leave us at school. We had our suitcases and all ready to go to his house and we would just be left on the curb because he wouldn't pick us up, or we would go to his house and we couldn't eat for the weekend because he would say he had no money.

Dr. James Dobson: So he had joint custody?

Rebekah Gregory: He had custody every other weekend and every Thursday night, so almost.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you tell anybody? Did you reach out? Your mom obviously knew it.

Rebekah Gregory: Mm-hmm. We were in and out of court, in and out of different supervised visits with him. There was a lot of different things going on, but unfortunately, my

mom had to take a lot during that time. And with lawyers and attorneys and the court orders, it was just something, we still had to see him. And so, we would go to his house every other weekend and we wouldn't eat for the weekend. We got to go to the gas station. I'll never forget this. He told us that we could pick out something that cost \$1. And at that time, I was looking for something big because I wanted to feed my sisters. I had two younger sisters. And so, I would get those cinnamon roll packages that were \$1. And I wouldn't eat any of it, and I would give it to my sisters to eat so that they could kind of eat off that the whole weekend. Now, looking back, that probably wasn't the healthiest choice, but my 11-year old brain thought that that was a good idea at the time.

But the last time that we saw him, we went to his house. And he started working at a casino. So he was a preacher on the side, and then he dealt cards at the casino among some other things, and always was bringing women in and out of the house and some really bad friends. We didn't live in a great neighborhood. And he left us alone one night and the air conditioning went out. It was in the afternoon when he left us, and he wouldn't have been back until that following day because he had a job at the casino.

And so, my sisters ended up getting really hot. They started hyperventilating. I put them in the shower to cool them off. And I was so terrified, because I knew that if I called my mom or called the police, I didn't know what he was going to do to me. But at that point, it didn't matter about me and my survival, it meant my sisters, and I knew that I had to get them help. And so, we called the police, and my mom came and got us and that was the last time we've ever seen my dad again, or my biological father.

Dr. James Dobson: You don't even know where he is.

Rebekah Gregory: I'm not sure. I know that he's been in a lot of trouble in the last several years. I know that his job has been to kind of rip off people's retirement accounts.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, Rebekah, where did you get this resiliency that we see today? Where did that come from? Common sense would tell you a child who's been through those kind of things, and that wasn't really the end of it, you got into a bad marriage also. And then, of course the bombing, that's more than most people have to put up with or take. And yet, you have and you've got a smile on your face. Is that brought by your relationship with Christ or is it in your temperament or both?

Rebekah Gregory: I think it's both, because my mom was really who set me on the path to Christ, because even though these terrible things were happening and we didn't understand it, and she was trying to get us out of a really dangerous situation, she could only do so much. And I remember many nights her just saying, "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and we're going to be okay." She promised.

Dr. James Dobson: She's a hero, too, isn't she?

Rebekah Gregory: She's absolutely a hero. My mom doesn't ever get enough credit. I can never say thank you enough to her. She's the reason I am who I am today. My mom is an amazing woman, and she's been through so much in her life. And what she did though, was never let that stop her from being the best mom she could.

Dr. James Dobson: Eventually she divorced your dad.

Rebekah Gregory: She did. She divorced my dad, and she went on to remarry. And my stepdad actually adopted us, and he's who I call my dad. He's who saw my prom and saw me graduate and welcomed my kids and my marriage and everything. He is my dad. He's the one that's been there through all of it with me. And so, I got a second chance.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you feel his love?

Rebekah Gregory: I do feel his love. He's amazing to us, and he really brought a lot in that we were missing.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, tell us about that relationship with a young man. That was kind of an impulsive marriage, wasn't it?

Rebekah Gregory: It was very impulsive, yes. I was at the marathon with a guy that I was dating at the time. And so, we went through this terrible tragedy together, and so all of a sudden, everyone wanted this fairytale ending. And I was dealing with so much physically as well as emotionally, that I didn't really even have time to really look at all of the red flags I was seeing and really figure out what was going on. And so, it kind of just...

Dr. James Dobson: Did he nurture you at all during that time?

Rebekah Gregory: No. No. It wasn't anything like that. And I look back on it, and we didn't even really have a good relationship. I don't even think we really knew each other. We had very little in common and it was very emotionally abusive.

Dr. James Dobson: Why did you marry him, as you look back?

Rebekah Gregory: I look back and I married him because I wanted it to be something that it wasn't. I felt like, "We survived this together. We're supposed to be together. Everyone's telling us this." The media got wind of it. They gave us this amazing fairytale wedding at the Biltmore mansion. It was all... It wasn't me, but at the same time, I wanted it to be something so much because I needed it at that point.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Rebekah Gregory: I was struggling. I was a mess. Not only was my PTSD at its highest form, but also just I wanted some kind of normalcy in my life. I was struggling for that.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. You were in chaos.

Rebekah Gregory: I was.

Dr. James Dobson: And lived in it.

Rebekah Gregory: I did.

Dr. James Dobson: So you married him after the bombing?

Rebekah Gregory: Yes, I did. I married him after the bombing. And it was a very, very short-lived marriage because we should have never been married. The best thing that ever happened to me was getting a letter at the hospital after my amputation, and it was from a woman that he had been cheating on me with. And it said, "Make the best decision for you and your son and leave before he causes more damage." It was text messages, very explicit text messages from him and someone else.

And it's very embarrassing, but I know that a lot of people go through this. And it's part of my story and it makes me appreciate what I have now so much more. So I really choose to talk about it because I want people to know, that are in emotionally or physically abusive relationships, that they don't have to stay that way. And there's happiness outside of it. And if you make a mistake, God is our redeemer and He forgives that.

Dr. James Dobson: As we look back over your life, Rebekah, we see an abused child, a home that was not what it should have been, and it disintegrated. And then, the bombing, and one thing right after another. I'm amazed that you landed where you are today.

Rebekah Gregory: Well, I'm like a poster child for childhood trauma, I guess.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Rebekah Gregory: But I take my life back every single day, because I don't want what's happened to me to defeat me. Or if it does defeat me for a day, I don't want it to defeat me for the rest of my life. Now, I am not naive to think that life after this is even going to be a fairytale. Just because something bad happens in our lives doesn't mean something else is not right around the corner. But we were never promised an easy life. And I may not be whole right now, but one day I will be, and that's what I look forward to. This is only temporary.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, Rebekah, we've talked about some bumps in a road that you've had, which is an understatement. Your first marriage just was a mess and the Lord has brought another man into your life.

Rebekah Gregory: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Tell us about him. What's his name?

Rebekah Gregory: Chris is his name.

Dr. James Dobson: Chris.

Rebekah Gregory: And he is just amazing. I can't say enough good things about him, but he actually-

Dr. James Dobson: He loves your kids?

Rebekah Gregory: He loves my kids. In fact, he adopted Noah, too. And so, he just is an amazing dad, amazing husband. And he's actually my college boyfriend.

Dr. James Dobson: Really?

Rebekah Gregory: So we reconnected after about 10 years. I saw that he was coming to Houston on a business trip, and we had dinner and he told me I was the one that got away from him and he was going to come down to Houston and marry me. And I didn't believe him. And four and a half months later, we were married on a beach in Jamaica.

Dr. James Dobson: What does he do?

Rebekah Gregory: He is in pipeline sales, so he sells piping to construction materials, couplings, valves, and fittings. He'll get me on that.

Dr. James Dobson: You're happily married?

Rebekah Gregory: Happily married. He's wonderful.

Dr. James Dobson: You've kind of come out of the valley and onto the mountaintop, haven't you?

Rebekah Gregory: I feel like I'm on a mountaintop right now. There's so many things that happen to steal our joy on a regular basis, but when you just wake up thankful to be here and count your blessings, it's a great day, regardless.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I'd like you to talk to the person out there who has been through some similar things, maybe not the same, but tough things. Talk to that person.

Rebekah Gregory: I think that if we allow ourselves to remain in a place where we are just so broken and we don't think that there's any hope left, then we don't allow God to work the way that He can in our lives. So for me, I've had all of these different traumas, and if someone listening has had these traumas too, then they can relate. But really, what I see is I see God through every one of those traumas. And I also see some of the things that I brought upon myself. So my life probably

didn't have to be as hard as it's been if I had followed God's way and not my own way.

And now, we have our foundation that is set up to provide mental health treatment for kids that have gone through trauma in their families. And it's only because I have been through that. I know what that looks like. And it's not just the bombing and it's not just one or two others. It's a whole lifetime of trauma that I'm using for a bigger purpose. We all have a purpose far more amazing than we can ever imagine, but we have to allow ourselves to trust in the Lord and have that relationship with Him so that He can really open us up to those amazing things.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, that's very well said. Talk about that ministry. I want to know more about what you're doing and how you do it. What's the name of it?

Rebekah Gregory: It's Rebekah's Angels Foundation, and we provide therapy treatment for children and families that have gone through their own traumas.

Dr. James Dobson: How do you find out about them?

Rebekah Gregory: It's an application process, so they apply on our website. And we also just try to do the education piece around the different states that our board members live in and then also on a national level, media wise. But what we really want people to know is that they don't have to live with their traumas anymore. So there's actually ways that... Neuroscience has come so far as you know, and you can actually reprocess those most traumatic memories, because I believe that God designed our minds to heal.

And we've partnered with some amazing organizations. Recently, we partnered with ART International, it's Accelerated Resolution Therapy. And they had been doing different types of treatments for veterans that have come back for more. And we are now their branch for children and families. We connect them to therapists. So we either bring them to Florida if there's not a provider in their area. We bring them down to Orlando, put them in a hotel, and pay for their flight and their therapy, or we send them to the nearest provider that's closest to them.

Dr. James Dobson: First of all, what ages are you dealing with?

Rebekah Gregory: We're dealing with children as early as four years old to 21 years old, the more adults, and also their families.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. Suppose you have an elementary school child who comes, and the child has been physically and emotionally abused or sexually abused. How do you begin the process of helping that child heal?

Rebekah Gregory: So they send in an application and then our board works to approve it. We also have an advisory board of different therapists, and then they can decide which therapy works best, or would work best, for the particular child's needs. Because it's not a cookie cutter thing. We don't want to just have a one-size-fits-all approach. And we're really concentrating on generational trauma, too, so we're trying to not only heal the child, but also the family members that are with that child. Because then, if you heal a child or you make them feel better and then they go back into a household that has had trauma in it, then you're just sending them back to the same place and eventually it's going to be a reoccurring factor. So in one to six sessions, based on hand and eye movements, they activate both sides of your brain and actually reprocess the traumatic memories.

Dr. James Dobson: Wow. Do you witness miraculous recoveries?

Rebekah Gregory: It's really been incredible. In the past couple of months, we've helped 24 children and families. And each person is different, each situation is different, but we have seen so much success through what we're doing and I've just continued to be in awe of how the Lord works.

Dr. James Dobson: We read in Romans that "All things work together for the good of them that love the Lord"-

Rebekah Gregory: My favorite verse.

Dr. James Dobson: ... "and are called according to His purpose."

Rebekah Gregory: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Has something good come out of the tragedy of a bombing?

Rebekah Gregory: So many amazing things have come out of the tragedy. You look at even the survivors and the victims' families even. People that lost their loved ones that day have now opened up these amazing organizations and foundations to give back. Because when we look back on it, there were millions across the world that were loving on us and supporting us in every part of this. So an act of hate that stretched a couple hundred feet was nothing compared to the good that we saw in people.

And my life is still good. I may have to put a leg on and have some surgeries, and it may not be the easiest thing. But I get to love my family and I get to help and try to encourage as many other people as I can and help bring them to Christ.

Dr. James Dobson: How's Noah doing?

Rebekah Gregory: He's wonderful. Noah got into therapy, the therapy that he needed early on. And the bombing is a story to him. It's something that is part of his testimony, but he is no longer emotionally affected by it.

Dr. James Dobson: But he remembers it.

Rebekah Gregory: He remembers it. I don't think he remembers it as much anymore, because he was five so he's forgotten some things.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Rebekah Gregory: But to hear him tell his testimony is a pretty cool thing, too.

Dr. James Dobson: I bet it is.

Rebekah Gregory: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you ever ask him to do that?

Rebekah Gregory: I do, because I want to know. And he wants to be involved in every aspect of our foundation because he says, "Mom, I should be the president because without me, you wouldn't have this foundation." So I said, "Yes, absolutely."

Dr. James Dobson: Well, that's a miracle in itself, isn't it?

Rebekah Gregory: Yes. So it's something neat that I hope continues and we'll be able to pass on down to our kids one day.

Dr. James Dobson: Talk about your book. First of all, you had a writer to assist you in writing this, right?

Rebekah Gregory: I did, but I'm really excited to write my own book, too. I think-

Dr. James Dobson: So that's coming. That's where I was leading.

Rebekah Gregory: It is.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you plan to write another one?

Rebekah Gregory: I plan to write another one that is just me. And there's so many different things that I feel like I can fill the chapters with, even the humorous things that happen when you're an amputee. For instance, my daughter loves to put things in my leg and hide my prosthetic leg from me. So I'll come in the room, and I'm in my wheelchair generally when I'm at home and I've had cereal in my leg, I've had baby dolls in my leg. It's been under her bed many times. The airport is always a fun experience.

Dr. James Dobson: She's not embarrassed by this.

Rebekah Gregory: Oh, she's definitely not. And one day, she will understand the magnitude of what it is, but right now she just thinks she's got a mom with one leg and it's completely normal.

Dr. James Dobson: How have you dealt with that? Do people stare at you, ask questions about it?

Rebekah Gregory: Oh, always. Kids are the best. They are the big starers, because the adults, they stare and then they look away. But the kids, they just fixate their eyes on me. And that part, I try to wear shorts and dresses and I still... My mom was really worried I wouldn't feel like a lady anymore. We had a conversation right after I got my amputation. She said, "I just want you to get one of those legs that look like a real leg so you'll feel like yourself." And I said, "Mom, part of me doing this and accepting everything for what it is, is I'm going to get a fake robot leg. And I'm still going to get my toes painted, and I'm still going to wear shorts and dresses. This is my mark of survival and nothing else." And so, I want people to ask me questions.

Dr. James Dobson: So this has not affected your sense of self-worth?

Rebekah Gregory: No. If anything, it's brought more self-worth to my life, as crazy as that is, because I used to be so self-conscious. And don't get me wrong, I still am. But I have grown in so many different ways, and part of that is I can't cover up what's happened to me. This is not something... I guess I can put jeans on if I don't necessarily want some stares one day. But part of me really accepting it is going around on a fake leg and not being ashamed of it.

Dr. James Dobson: There's no better way to end this two-day conversation than this, Rebekah. I've loved talking to you. You are a resilient woman. I said that in the beginning, and we now see the evidence of it. I trust that the Lord's hand would continue to be on you and on your children. You have two children?

Rebekah Gregory: I do.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Rebekah Gregory: One of which they didn't think I'd be able to have after Boston.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. They didn't think you could get pregnant, did they?

Rebekah Gregory: No. And we spent some time in the NICU. She was on a ventilator. And I almost lost my life again the weekend that she was born. But she is as wonderful and healthy and sassy as ever, and I'm still here, too.

Dr. James Dobson: You've got one whale of a story to tell. And as we said last time, you're available to speak on this.

Rebekah Gregory: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Not only what happened to you, but what God's done in your life.

Rebekah Gregory: So many things.

Dr. James Dobson: Man, what a great message.

Rebekah Gregory: Thank you so much.

Dr. James Dobson: Thank you for coming and being with us. You've blessed all the people that are here in the studio, and I know you've blessed people across the country. We're heard on 1,300 stations and outlets, and I just trust that this is going to go out there and stick in somebody's heart.

Rebekah Gregory: Thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: That someone out there who was desperate, who was saying, "I have been singled out by life. I can't deal with this. I can't accept it." and they're victimized from there on. I hope this conversation has helped them get beyond it and begin to take their life back.

Rebekah Gregory: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Blessings to you. Give your husband my regards. Next time you come, when you get this second book written, you come here and you bring him, and you bring Noah and bring your daughter. What's her name?

Rebekah Gregory: I can't wait. Ryleigh.

Dr. James Dobson: Okay.

Rebekah Gregory: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Bring the whole family.

Rebekah Gregory: I will.

Dr. James Dobson: Okay. Hey, bless your mom. I pray that the Lord would put His arm around her, because she is a hero. You said it.

Rebekah Gregory: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: I can see it. And as she listens to these broadcasts, she's very much a part of it, isn't she?

Rebekah Gregory: She absolutely is. And she will be bawling her eyes out.

Dr. James Dobson: We're out of time. Have a good trip home.

Rebekah Gregory: Thank you.

Roger Marsh: Rebekah Gregory certainly is a remarkable woman. What a powerful testimony we've heard over the past couple of days here on Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and I hope you've been encouraged by what Rebekah has had to share. If you'd like to share her story from the past couple of days, or if you'd like to listen to this broadcast again, remember you can do so by visiting our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

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