



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** A Story of Cancer and Comfort – Part 2

**Guest(s):** Dr. David Jeremiah

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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:** Well, welcome to Family Talk, the radio home of Dr. James Dobson, one of America's most trusted voices on the institution of the family and preeminent Christian child psychologist. I'm Roger Marsh. However you're listening to us today, whether it's in the car, on the radio or via our app or streaming the podcast, thank you so much for making Family Talk a part of your day. Thank you also for your prayers and your financial support for this ministry as well.

In just a moment, you're going to hear part two of a classic broadcast that features a conversation Dr. Dobson had with Dr. David Jeremiah. Dr. Jeremiah is a well-respected pastor, a bestselling author, and a radio broadcaster. He is also a cancer survivor. According to the National Cancer Institute, last year, an estimated 1.8 million new cases of cancer were diagnosed in the US, and over 600,000 people lost their lives as a result of this disease. Did you know that 39.5% of men and women will be diagnosed with cancer at some point during their lifetimes?

It's certainly a sobering fact and something to keep in mind as you take care of yourself and your loved ones. Now, on yesterday's broadcast, Dr. Jeremiah talked about his battle with cancer and briefly explained why he thinks God allows suffering in the first place. If you missed yesterday's program, by the way, just visit [drjamesdobson.org/broadcast](http://drjamesdobson.org/broadcast), and you can hear that program in its entirety.

On today's broadcast, Dr. Jeremiah will unpack the low points of his diagnosis, including a discouraging relapse and a draining recovery period. He'll also staunchly refute the belief that Christians won't and shouldn't experience pain and suffering in this life. Well, let's listen now to the conclusion of this fascinating conversation featuring Dr. Dobson and Dr. David Jeremiah on this edition of Family Talk.

**Dr. James Dobson:** Dr. David Jeremiah is the senior pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church in El Cajon, California, and many people know about his national radio and

television broadcast called Turning Point, and he's written many books. David, it's good to have you back. You have a quote in your book that I want to take just a moment to read because it is so good.

"Everyone has a point somewhere in the geography of their souls marking the limits of their faith. It's the point at which faith begins to unravel. For younger Christians, that point may be just around the corner. Seasoned believers can travel much farther before reaching it. Only we ourselves know where that point lies, and we find out during a season of testing. A trial will build to a crescendo in your life. You attempt to handle it and you pray about it, but life will not cooperate. As the days turn into weeks and then weeks to months and even months to years, you reach that personal point somewhere in the scheme of your suffering when you begin to give up on God."

Now, that's an admission that you don't hear in the Christian community very often. I wrote about it in *When God Doesn't Make Sense* and called it the betrayal barrier. There is a point at which you feel God has turned his back on you. He's betrayed you. Here, all of that prayer and all of that dedication of your life and all of the ministry that you've invested and everything you care about and the Bible reading and your cancer came back. Did you hit the betrayal barrier?

Dr. David Jeremiah: I don't know if I hit it, but I came as close as I've ever come. I just couldn't understand it. I couldn't understand why. I didn't ever verbalize that. I just dealt with it in my own soul. Why has this been allowed to return? But I just realized that God sees all of this in a different way than we do. He doesn't perhaps even separate it into episodes. He sees it as one grand experience through which He's taking His child. I have no guarantees even now, Dr. Dobson, that I'm cancer free. I mean I could go home tomorrow and find out that it's returned.

I live in the reality of this disease is now a part of my life. Whether it's cured or not, it will always be a part of my life. It's like-

Dr. James Dobson: But that's all of us.

Dr. David Jeremiah: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: We're not guaranteed one more breath.

Dr. David Jeremiah: No. But just like with what we discussed with the experiences you went through, I don't think about it all the time, but it's kind of like background noise. It's there. Every once in a while, if I have an unexpected pain or something happens in my system that I'm not prepared for, the questions come back. I just know that this experience has given me a much more presence to my walk with the Lord, a sense of presence that each day is so important because each day is such a gift. Each day is such a wonderful gift of God's grace to my life.

Dr. James Dobson: You made a vow to the Lord somewhere along the line. You talked about it in your book. What was that vow?

Dr. David Jeremiah: Interestingly enough, when we went through the stem cell transplant, we did it as outpatient. That's a brand-new technique, and Scripps Clinic has one of the primary originators of that technique. So Donna and I were staying in a hotel 20 minutes away from the Scripps Clinic, and this was Easter Sunday. I got up, and this was the low point of my recovery process. I was looking for something on television that might be encouraging, some religious program, some gospel program that might encourage me, and I was having a hard time finding anything. It was Easter Sunday.

I hadn't lost it emotionally at all. All of a sudden, in that moment, I lost it. I just began to sob. Donna thought I had hurt myself or something had gone wrong. She came in and she's, "What's wrong?" I just said, "You know what? I don't want to be here. I want to be in church. I want to be with God's people. I don't want to be here. It's Easter Sunday. What am I doing in this place?" I remembered that day saying something like this, that I would never again take the privilege of being in church with God's people for granted, ever. What a privilege we have to be in church. ]

I've not had many situations where I haven't been able to do that. But for that Sunday, Easter Sunday, the glorious resurrection Sunday, I was isolated in a motel room trying to find something on television, which wasn't available, to encourage my heart. I just realized how much I loved the people of God, how much I loved being a pastor, how much I loved the church. I vowed I'd never take that for granted again, ever.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, when you've walked the valley of the shadow of death, those people who know the Lord really do provide the sustenance to continue on.

Dr. David Jeremiah: They really do. David, when he couldn't go to the temple one time in the Psalms, he cried out. He remembered what it was like to be in the temple and how much it hurt him to be away. I don't think we realize that in our generation today, how vital the church is to us. Of course, I've given my life to the church, so that's probably a little bit different than some. As a pastor, that's been my whole adult existence. It was interrupted, and I felt the pain of it.

Dr. James Dobson: David, let's swing the focal point now from your circumstances to all of those many people who are listening to us right now. There are thousands, maybe a million or more, who have gone around a bend in the road, and they don't know how to handle it. They're discouraged, and they're down. They're depressed. They have hit the betrayal barrier. They have gone through that experience that I just read from your book.

What do you say to them? I mean some of them have experienced cancer, some of them heart disease, some of them financial reverses, some of them the loss of a child. All of them suffering. What help can you give them?

Dr. David Jeremiah: Well, one of the things you said just a minute ago is so very true. One of the reasons we put stories in this book from people, other than myself, who were going through different kinds of bends in the road was that one day I had the idea that I want to ask our people who listen to Turning Point to tell us about their bend in the road. I thought maybe I would get a couple of good stories for my book. I thought I might get 10 or 15 or 20 stories. Dr. Dobson, we got well over 800 within a two-week period. You won't have a hard time understanding that, I'm sure.

As I looked at those stories and read them, I realized that God's grace is the same for all of us, whether it's cancer, whether it's divorce, whether it's broken vows, whether it's children who are unfaithful to their commitment. God's grace is there for us if we will avail ourselves of it. I'd like to say to those who may not be going through a storm, as we said a few moments ago, walk closely with the Lord so you don't have to take a long time to get caught up when the storm comes because you need God immediately when that time comes.

His Word is sufficient, and God's people are there for you. Prayer is going to be the strength of your life. Those things that I found as a pastor that I'd always believed, but that I experienced during this time, are the very same things that will come alongside of anyone who goes through a bend in the road if they're walking with the Lord. I think sometimes we have to recognize, Dr. Dobson, that God sends storms into the lives of some disobedient Christians to get them back where they belong. You don't want to go through a storm like that, if you can help it.

Dr. James Dobson: I have a good friend named Reuben Welch, who's had a great influence on me. I don't know if you know him-

Dr. David Jeremiah: I love that guy.

Dr. James Dobson: He's from your part of the world-

Dr. David Jeremiah: Yeah, he is.

Dr. James Dobson: ... down in San Diego. I've been influenced by his writings and his speaking for many years. He used to come to my home church and speak often. I remember a message that he gave one time that's along the same line of what you're talking about here. He said, "Life does not move in a straight line. It zigs and zags." He gave the example from Jeremiah 31:15, where Jeremiah is prophesying the time when the Messiah would come. He made the point that even for the Messiah, the long awaited one, there was a bend in the road, even

for Him and for His time and great sorrow by the mothers, weeping, who could not be comforted.

All through the Scripture, we see that. The road turns. It does not move in a straight line. If you think it's going to, you're going to be disillusioned and probably not many days hence.

Dr. David Jeremiah: That's a real tragedy because there's a kind of theology that's expressed out there sometimes these days that would give people the impression that if they're walking with God the way they should, there won't be any bends in the road, and that's just not true.

Dr. James Dobson: That bothers me a great deal because it does disillusion people.

Dr. David Jeremiah: It really does.

Dr. James Dobson: They're leaning against the wind. It's a false theology. Then when trouble comes, there are only two or three or four possibilities. God isn't there. He doesn't care. He's powerless. He's gone. He left the universe-

Dr. David Jeremiah: Well, it pushes-

Dr. James Dobson: ... or you have sin in your life.

Dr. David Jeremiah: It pushes the betrayal barrier right up next to them at the very beginning of the trial.

Dr. James Dobson: Christians often come at a moment like that, like Job's friends, to tell them all kinds of wrong things.

Dr. David Jeremiah: Oh my. I'll tell you what, I could write a whole book on the things that people say to you when you're going through something like this, Christian people, well-meaning people. They love to come up and tell you about the relative they have who had exactly what you have, who died last week.

Dr. James Dobson: Goodness.

Dr. David Jeremiah: That always blesses your heart and encourages your life.

Dr. James Dobson: How about those that tell you if you'd eat carrots, you'd get over it?

Dr. David Jeremiah: I have three boxes full of alternative solutions to my problem. I think that it sounds so simplistic, but just people would just come and just say, "We love you, and we've increased our prayer for you tenfold." Or like I mentioned, when I went to the Brooklyn Tabernacle, they all promised to pray for me. When I went back there, in fact, I think Jim even mentioned this in *Fresh Wind, Fresh*

*Fire.* I went back there. They came up to me one after the other and they said, "Oh, Dr. Jeremiah, we cried out to God for you."

Dr. David Jeremiah: I just knew in my heart when people would express that, that I wasn't alone, that I was surrounded by a group of people that were going to strengthen my hands in this thing, and they did.

Dr. James Dobson: Let me role play with you. Let's suppose I'm the father of a child who was five years of age, and that little boy was the centerpiece of my life. I loved him more than life itself, and he became ill. My wife and I began praying for him. It was one downhill struggle after another, and we lost him six months ago. Now I am very angry at God. He had the power to save my little boy. I mean He created the whole universe out of nothing, and He was too busy or too unconcerned to care about my child.

Dr. James Dobson: He let that little boy die, and he's gone now. I can't forgive God for what He's done. And yet, I know I must. What advice do you have for me?

Dr. David Jeremiah: Jim, I've had that exact experience a number of times as a pastor. I don't think you ever feel so at a loss for words as you do when you face a situation like that and especially if you have small children yourself or if you have grandchildren. You want to reach out to them and somehow take that pain away. You wish there were words you could say that would make that pain go away. I think the first thing I realized is that I cannot make the pain go away. The pain will only go away over a period of time and perhaps never completely.

But I can come to them with the knowledge that I have that even though I don't understand the evidence and the circumstances that are presented at that time, I know beyond any shadow of a doubt that I have a good God and that my God does all things well and that in His scheme of things, while we can't comprehend it, He is in the midst of a plan that affects many more lives than just the lives that are present here and that God is going to be gracious to them and help them and strengthen them through this time and that He has trusted them with a great sorrow that He is going to use in their lives to help others.

But if I had to say one sentence that would make it all better, I wouldn't know what to say except that I know and I choose to believe in the goodness of God in spite of the things that happen that would make anyone question.

Dr. James Dobson: Don't try to force simplistic explanations for that circumstance.

Dr. David Jeremiah: Oh my. No.

Dr. James Dobson: God didn't give you enough information to do that. Certainly don't go to somebody who is going through that and give them your simplistic explanations.

Dr. David Jeremiah: No.

Dr. James Dobson: We don't know what God is doing. He just told us to trust Him even when we can't track Him.

Dr. David Jeremiah: You know what? There's another part of this that I think we often don't talk about, and that is after this thing was over with the stem cell transplant, when I was going through this, there was a wonderful rabbi that I met, who actually happened to be my oncologist's rabbi, who was going through the same thing. They set up a thing at Scripps Clinic where we were invited to come on the same night and talk about our cancer and our faith. I won't go into the discussion we had, except that the first question I was asked was, "Why do you think that you, a man of God, got cancer?"

I remember saying, "There's only one reason. I am human." We are a diseased people. Whether we're Christians or non-Christians, cancer touches us alike. There's no free pass from cancer when you become a believer. So I think if we try to equate whether we're Christians or non-Christians with our sickness, our disease, our pain, our hurt, that's a major mistake, unless it is a result of some sin that we have done and God is allowing that in our lives to bring us back to a place of obedience. Pain happens to all of us and cancer. I'm as much susceptible to cancer or any other disease as any other human being on this Earth.

Dr. James Dobson: There's a serious theological problem with the question, isn't there-

Dr. David Jeremiah: Yes, there is.

Dr. James Dobson: ... or the person who asked the question? Because in essence, they are saying, "If you do enough good things, you won't go through this." Of course, it's appointed unto man once to die. So where are the people who did all the good things in 1820? They're all dead.

Dr. David Jeremiah: Sure.

Dr. James Dobson: We're all going to die. It comes to everybody. When they say, "Why you?" I hope this isn't an insulting answer, but why not you? This is the human condition. This is every one of us.

Dr. David Jeremiah: And it shocks them when you say that.

Dr. James Dobson: But going back to the man with the five-year-old, I believe with everything that's within me that there is a God who is weeping with that father and is longing to hold him and put his arms around him and get him through this difficult time.

Dr. David Jeremiah: We must remember that He lost His Son, too. He watched His Son die. He understands. He is a high priest who understands every emotion that we face.

- Dr. James Dobson: David, I told you before we came to the studio that I had been listening to Dr. Chuck Swindoll on the radio on the way to work one day recently. He shared a Scripture that seems so relevant to what we're talking about here today. It's found in Hebrews 5:7-10. Let me read it because it makes the case you're making.
- "During the days of Jesus' life on Earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save Him from death. And He was heard because of His reverent submission." Now listen. "Although He was a Son, the Son of God, He learned obedience from what He suffered. And once made perfect, He became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey Him and was designated by God to be the high priest in the order of Melchizedek." Jesus, Himself profited from suffering.
- Dr. David Jeremiah: That's certainly what it seems to say, isn't it, that He learned obedience from suffering? Of course, we know He was the sinless Son of God. He was incapable of sin. But He was, in His pure humanity, the suffering was a part of that process. Maybe it was Chuck's Swindoll who said this, "That if God wants to greatly use a man, He, first of all, has to crush him." I used to pray I could be the exception. I used to pray that God would use me, and I could bypass that whole suffering business. I just don't know that He does that.
- I think He takes us through those difficult things. It's a stewardship He gives us. From that, He then enables us in His grace to be what He always wanted us to be.
- Dr. James Dobson: What kind of reactions have you had to your book?
- Dr. David Jeremiah: Well, I wrote this book for one reason. I always wanted something that I could give to people who I knew were going through a hard time. That's what kind of reaction I've gotten from them. I have had people call me from all over the United States saying, "Here's my friend. Would you inscribe one of these books and send it to him because he's going through this disease or they're going through this trouble?" We've gotten so many affirming letters from people who've said that this has been such an encouragement to them, such a strength to them to just force them back into the Old Testament Scriptures and see the kind of God we have and how He helps us in the difficult times of life.
- Dr. James Dobson: Well, we're coming down to the last few moments of our program here. In the first chapter of your book, you have a poem that was written by Helen Steiner Rice, and it's called "The Bend in the Road." Why don't you read it?
- Dr. David Jeremiah: Okay. "Sometimes we come to life's crossroads and we view what we think is the end, but God has a much wider vision and He knows that it's only a bend. The road will go on and get smoother. And after we've stopped for a rest, the path that lies hidden beyond us is often the path that is best. So rest and relax



and grow stronger. Let go, and let God share your load. And have faith in a brighter tomorrow. You've just come to a bend in the road."

Dr. James Dobson: That's beautiful.

Dr. David Jeremiah: Yeah. That really encouraged me.

Dr. James Dobson: As a way of closing the program, pray for that person that's just gone around a bend in the road that they didn't see coming-

Dr. David Jeremiah: All right. I'd be glad to do that.

Dr. James Dobson: ... and they're now struggling mightily.

Dr. David Jeremiah: I'll do that. Lord God, we thank you so much that you hear us when we pray. When we cry out to you in the midst of our disruptive moments, you are never closer to us than at that moment. Lord God, I pray today for those who are listening to this broadcast, wherever they may be. Perhaps today was the day when they faced this unexpected moment in their life. They weren't prepared for it. They had no way to get ready for it. All of a sudden, their whole world has been turned upside down.

Lord, I pray that you will show yourself strong on their behalf and may they look to you alone for strength. I pray that they will remember what they know to be true of you and your goodness and your power and your strength, that they will call upon you in the time of trouble in their life and that, Lord, you will be so real to them. We know that you're never closer to the vine as the husbandman than when you're pruning it. We know, Lord God, that you're going to be close to the people who are going through these difficult moments.

Lord, so many times we come through these and we come to the other side and we say, "I never ever felt God's presence like I did during those moments." I pray that you will help them to know that. And then, Lord, give them good and godly friends who will strengthen them and be sensitive to them. Lord, I pray that you will help them to be able to find in their own heart and through their relationship with God and through those that you bring alongside of them, the strength to walk through this bend and, on the other side, be stronger for it.

So, I just pray your special grace upon them. I ask you to minister to them today, wherever they may be as they listen to this broadcast. I thank you that you hear our prayers. In the strong name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.

Dr. James Dobson: Dr. David Jeremiah, thank you for being our guest again, for being able to share so openly about your infirmity and your physical situation. I pray that the Lord will keep you healthy for many, many more years.

Dr. David Jeremiah: Thank you. I pray He will answer your prayer. Amen.

Dr. James Dobson: Come back and see us.

Dr. David Jeremiah: Thank you. I will.

Roger Marsh: Well, what a powerful prayer to end this two-day broadcast here on Family Talk. God certainly hears our cries and personally comforts us when we walk the difficult roads of life. If you're in need of prayer, won't you give us a call? We have staff standing by 24/7 to take your request. We're here to pray for you and with you. Our number is (877) 732-6825. Now, if you'd like to learn more about Dr. David Jeremiah or his book, *When Your World Falls Apart*, visit our broadcast page at [drjamesdobson.org/broadcast](http://drjamesdobson.org/broadcast).

His book is an excellent resource to lift you up when you're feeling discouraged. Again, you'll find all that information and more when you go to [drjamesdobson.org/broadcast](http://drjamesdobson.org/broadcast). Another way you can connect with our ministry is by following Family Talk on Facebook. We focus on blessing and encouraging you and your family with uplifting content there. Simply search for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, and you'll be glad you did.

Well, that's all the time we have for today. Be sure to join us again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks for listening, and have a blessed rest of your day.

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