



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: So Long, Normal – Part 2

Guest(s): Laura Story

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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.

Laura Story: So, we had been married for about a year when we began to notice Martin having some memory issues and even some just energy level issues. After years of having some testing, Martin was diagnosed with a brain tumor. And so, we began the process of figuring out, "Okay, so what do we need to do?" Had the surgery and probably about a month and a half after finding out the initial news. And then he was in the hospital for about three months after the surgery. He had some complications, the surgery ended up being more serious than what they had initially thought.

So, Martin was finally discharged from the hospital three months later, but where we had kind of assumed, "Okay, they're going to remove the tumor. We're going to get back to life as normal." We found ourselves in a very anything but normal situation where Martin had all of these lingering effects from the tumor, from the surgery, from complications. And so, we began the journey that now we kind of refer to as Martin's brain injury.

Roger Marsh: Well, that was Grammy award winning singer songwriter, Laura Story talking about the initial days, weeks and months of her and her husband, Martin's lives, when Martin was diagnosed with a brain tumor that has left him with a lifelong disability. I'm Roger Marsh, and you are listening to a special edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. On today's program we're bringing you the second half of our co-host Dr. Tim Clinton's conversation with Laura Story. Yesterday, Laura detailed growing up in a Christian home, marrying her childhood sweetheart, and starting married life in the comfort of normalcy and routine. However, as you heard at the beginning of today's broadcast that normalcy didn't last for long. Now, before we get back into Dr. Tim Clinton's conversation with Laura's story, let me tell you a little bit about our guest today.

Laura is a Bible teacher, worship leader, and Grammy award-winning singer song writer, her song "Blessings," which we heard on yesterday's broadcast was certified gold back in 2011. That song inspired her first book entitled *What If Your Blessings Come Through Raindrops?* Laura is also the author of *When God*

Doesn't Fix It, and *So Long, Normal*. She has a graduate degree from Covenant Theological Seminary and has served as a worship leader at Perimeter Church in Atlanta since 2005. She is married to Martin and they have four children.

Dr. Tim Clinton, of course, is our co-host here at Family Talk. He also serves as the president of the American Association of Christian Counselors and is the resident authority on mental health and relationships here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Here now is Dr. Clinton and his guest Laura Story, continuing their conversation on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Welcome back to Family Talk. Our special in studio guest is Laura Story. Just came off stage. We had a delightful conversation yesterday. Can't wait to pick up the tempo here today. Laura, welcome back.

Laura Story: Thank you so much for having me back.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Laura, you have a new book out called *So Long, Normal*.

Laura Story: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: *Living And Loving The Free Fall Of Faith*. Laura, I've been with you at many events. I've seen your family, they're wide open.

Laura Story: Oh, wide open.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Your life is...

Laura Story: That's a very kind way to describe it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's pretty wild. I love it. And there's a message that's resonating with women in particular about just letting go of so many things. That quest for identity expectations of what we have in life, security and so much more. That's the heart of the new book.

Laura Story: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's like what you've been going through in your heart.

Laura Story: Yes. Yes. Well, so I began to write it this shared event that all of us went through that was the big COVID quarantine, where every event that I had for the next six to 12 months was cancelled.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Shut down. It's crazy.

Laura Story: Yeah. All of it was canceled. So that was my normal, but it really allowed me to reflect a little bit more on the fact that normal was kind of stripped away from us very early on with my husband's disability. And then with our decision to

trust God with starting a family, even with a husband with a disability. And that's, I hope we get to talk about that a little bit as well. Because that's been probably the most unique learning lately, but this idea of being okay with letting go of normal and it's not just this philosophical, believing God has something better.

I began to study the Scriptures and here's what I saw. I began to see person after person in the Scripture that God was choosing to, for Him to do something extraordinary through them. It all began with this invitation for them to leave that which was comfortable and that which was familiar. So you think about the story of Mary, you think about the story of Hagar, you think about ... You think about all of these. There was some sort of disruption either that they made willingly or that just was thrust upon them, but God never used that change for evil. He always used it for good. And it's like the starting place of Him doing something truly significant through your life.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. You looked at a lot of Bible characters and you were trying to look at the journey of faith because you saw where everyone was told to have faith, have faith, have faith. It's tough to have faith when the wheels are coming off. It's tough to have faith when God is confusing. It's tough to have faith when you don't have any money. What did you find most significant as you were mining through those stories?

Yeah. Well, I think one of the reasons that we are so tentative to walk away from normal, to step out in faith is because we are looking to normal to give us comfort. We're looking to normal to give us value. That's why we want to be like all the other moms. Doing the same things the other families are doing. Our kids be achieving the same goals because we find value there. But what we truly need to do is see that every comfort, value, significance, every bit of that we have in the person of Jesus. So we can be called away from those worldly versions of stability, those worldly versions of security, because we truly have a God who says, I am your security. You lean upon me and you will not be shaken. And He has given us that value and validation that we don't have to look to the normal things of this world because we find that in him.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Laura, how'd you cross over because for most people they're going to say, "Listen, I teach that. I believe it. I just have a hard time doing it."

Laura Story: Yeah. And that's so kind of...

Dr. Tim Clinton: I have a hard time letting go because I it is all about the Joneses or whatever. People just get lost in it.

Laura Story: Well, I think part of it's not even ... Because some days I live like this other days, I don't. Speaking of crossing over, I crossed over that 40 year old threshold. And that was part of it because I realized I had just always been living life in a way that if I could just get this in order, then I would feel at peace. If I could just get

this thing working, or if I could just achieve this thing, then I could have happiness. I could have whatever it is that we're longing for and realizing like, I don't want to live the rest of my life this way. Nope. Proverbs 31, this Proverbs 31 woman that so many women feel defeated by, how could I ever be like that? But one of my favorite verses. Yeah, because I clearly-

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hey, if you listen to a lot of radio and television, Christian, it's like, you have this massive list of everything you've got to do.

Laura Story: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: To make the world go around. It's like, I can't even think like that. It's like growing up as a kid, you've got what, 10, 20,000 commands coming at you like every day or something and yeah.

Laura Story: I'm not...

Dr. Tim Clinton: Even the best kids can't keep all them.

Laura Story: Yeah. And I'm not going to be threshing my own wheat when Walmart sells great wheat. I can just go to buy my bread there. Anyway, but I think about so many things that our characteristic of this, of this woman or, or this picture that the Scriptures give us. But probably my favorite one, it says that "she is clothed in strength and dignity and she laughs at the days to come." And I was thinking one day about if someone was to describe me, they would probably say "she is clothed in free t-shirts from women's events and she wrings her hands and lies awake at night, worrying about the days to come" because that's, I have to admit, that is how I spend most of my days because I'm anxious about the future. And I think about how, and I don't want to go, I'm not saying this to blame guilt on anyone.

But when you think about what that says to a watching world about what I believe about God. So I would say with my words, I believe God is all powerful. That God is completely controlled. That God is completely in control, that God is my provider. But when I live anxious, when I live worried, what does that truly say about what I believe about God? What does that show other people about who God is? And I finally got to the point of saying, "I don't want to waste another minute worrying about the future. I want to be someone that has enough faith that I laugh at the days to come." Do I laugh every day? No, but I can say I laugh a lot more than I did before.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I heard a definition on faith years back. Faith is my ability to trust my wellbeing into the hands of another person who I believe has my best interest at heart.

Laura Story: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And we know the Scripture says without faith it's impossible to please God and those who come to him must first believe that He is. And that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. And it's like, have faith, have faith. But there is something about the valley of vision. The old Puritans called it that. That in the valley of vision, how about in the valley of bareness of brokenness of maybe having the extra responsibility to care for the kids, et cetera, what were the words of, my eyes have now seen Him.

Laura Story: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: When you see differently, I think it helps you live differently.

Laura Story: Yeah. And it's a hard, I don't want to even sugarcoat it, because it's a hard road when you have, whether you're a caregiver, whether you're a spouse of someone with disability, whether you're a parent of someone with disability, whether you are the disabled person, it is a hard road. And so I'm not trying to make it out to be oh, just trust God more and you'll be okay. But I talk to so many women and whether disability is part of their story or not, I talk to so many people that the greater strain in their life isn't necessarily the disability, but them trying to live life as normal with the disability, rather than allowing God to use that disability to change their normal.

So, for instance, this kind of keeping up with the Joneses, we can't do that for so many reasons. One place where I see this in such a real way is our relationship with social media. Because social media, it started off this cool thing, "Oh I can find out what so and so from high school is doing," but it's so much a mixed bag because yes, you can use it to just kind of find out what people are up to or you can get so submerged in what everyone else is doing, that you don't seem to be able to achieve. And you're comparing yourself to other people's lives.

My sister said it once. She said it used to be that if there was a party over the weekend that you weren't invited to, you may not have known about it or you may not have, or you may have just heard someone mention it in passing, but now you can see exactly what they ate for dinner. You can see how much fun everyone had. So you have this comparison that I want to say, okay, so this whole means that was established to make people more connected. How is it now that they're feeling more disconnected than ever? And anytime I get to speak, encouraging women to make sure they are grounded in the information of Scripture, rather than the information of social media. Because it's so often that, and I'll say this from me, I'm exchanging the truth of God for a bunch of experiences and emotions that are not bad in and of themselves, but you will be formed by what you spend your time-

Dr. Tim Clinton: You are who you spend time with.

Laura Story: Yes. And what you spend your time ingesting. That's what will form you. And if it's the Word of God, you will be formed in His image. And if it's social media, then you can't really expect to not feel less than.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Because in the midst of an insane world where everything's changed, our normal is gone. Whatever normal is, maybe normalcy is pathology. I've seen lectures on that very thing. I know in your book, *So Long, Normal: Living And Loving The Free Fall Of Faith*, you take people on a journey. Not only just to say, listen, it's okay to understand. Maybe it's not a detour, it's just a change of life. It becomes the new normal. You've got to still have hooks though. You've got to have anchors. Because if you don't, you're going to be random and chaotic. And the insanity will only go to another level. And so you've got to ground yourself. You talk about grounding yourself just now in God's Word. You talk about the importance of community, which I think is critical. And our constant companion, the Holy Spirit in life, a lot of people don't necessarily want to talk, but it's everything.

Laura Story: Yes. You don't want your joy and your peace in life to be tied to your circumstances. You don't want to give your circumstances all the power there, which you as a counselor, you could probably talk about that for hours, but it's not that you don't have anything sturdy in your life. It's that you have to have the things that the Scriptures say you need to be sturdy. So you have to have a thriving relationship with the Lord. If you're not prioritizing that, prioritizing hearing His voice, I always tell people, it's not legalistic to say, "Hey, you need to spend time with the Lord every morning." But it is in the same way that you look at the mirror every day to tell you who you are, you need to look to the Scriptures to tell you who you are so that you don't wander through your whole day trying to decipher who you are based on people's reactions to you, based on your success at work, based on all these other things.

If you begin by saying, "Okay, God remind me that I'm your child. Remind me what my purpose here on this earth is." Then you can go through the rest of your day being a blessing to others. So it's not that you don't need any sturdiness, you just need the right sturdiness and you need a team. You need a team around you. So you're not wandering through life on your own. God created us to be in relationship with Him and to be in relationship with others.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Laura, we all live in, they say, a story. And in that story, I think Chesterson once said this that we're destined to misunderstand the story we find ourselves in from time to time. And we never know what lies ahead. What's around the bend for, but the good news, I think this is what we're talking about. He's in the midst of the story. And He sees us through and I go back to where we started with the song "Blessings." Maybe His blessings, as you said, are in disguise. They come through those tough times and they're mercies.

Laura, you were just speaking to a packed house. You could hear a pin drop out there. It's because you know what I know. All those women out there are on a journey. Some of them are absolutely broken. And you went to close out by

playing "Blessings." And what moved me was how you move from that into "Great Is Thy Faithfulness." Because in the midst of, and you know what, they were weeping, they're crying over was the heartache, the heartbreak in their life. And that He is still faithful. That like Jeremiah wrote in the book of Lamentations, "His mercies are new every day."

Laura Story: Every day.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Great is His faithfulness. And I know like you, sometimes those are hard words to speak, to embrace, but it brings tears to our eyes because we know that He is with us. What did you want every woman in this church to walk away with today?

Laura Story: Oh, that's such a good question. I want them to know how deeply God loves them and how much He is for them. Even if He is not fixing the thing in their life, that they so long that He would fix. It does not mean He is not a good God. It does not mean that He doesn't care for them and doesn't have good things for their lives. It truly means that His plans are different than ours and His perspective is different than ours. I had a friend many years ago, challenge me saying, "Laura, I know you to be a woman of faith, right up to the moment that your life requires faith." It's really easy. It's really easy to have faith in a theoretical situation. But when it comes to brokenness, will we trust him even when we don't understand his plans, even when they look drastically different than our own? And that's what I would want these women to know is just that God is no less good when we go through those valleys and He still loves you and He will continue to sustain you as you place your trust in Him.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You also said in your talk, you made a reference to the book of Ephesians. In your mind, there's a difference between being created by God versus for God.

Laura Story: Yes. That's probably, if you were to ask me "what's your life verse," and there are so many great verses in the Scriptures. But Ephesians 2:10, where God tell us that He created us as His workmanship, His masterpiece, His handiwork. So often we look at ourselves and go, "Really? Me, a masterpiece?" But it goes even further than that. We weren't just created by God as His handiwork. We were created for good purposes, and it says that He has prepared beforehand. So, we have these situations in our lives that sometimes we're wondering "Have I done something wrong? Is this the product of God falling asleep at the wheel? What's happened here?" But the truth is, those are the very situations that God has prepared beforehand for us to walk in. Obviously, God is not the author of sin, but He certainly knows how to wield that brokenness and allows different things to enter into our lives because He believes that that is what we need in order for our benefit and His glory,

Dr. Tim Clinton: I have a copy of your book in my hand. *So Long, Normal: Living And Loving The Free Fall Of Faith* on it, you're on a zip line, I think.

Laura Story: Yep. That's it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Cruising, something way out of your comfort zone. But that just simply means that's where God's taking us.

Laura Story: Exactly.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And ultimately, it's to Himself, and that's where our freedom is.

Laura Story: And even in those moments that it feels like there's no foundation, when we have that lifeline to God, through the person of Jesus, we truly do have everything that we need.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You have a new song out. I'd like to close with it. It's called "Hello, Unknown." Set us up.

Laura Story: Okay. This is the fun part when we just come to the place of saying, "God, I can't control it all, God, I can't fix it all. I trust you. And I'm just along for the ride. Hello, unknown."

(Singing). "I am letting go of everything I know. Farewell, predictable. No more playing safe, I'll freefall into faith. I'll say goodbye control, Hello, Unknown."

Roger Marsh: You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. And that was the conclusion of Dr. Tim Clinton's two-part interview with award-winning singer/songwriter, Laura Story. In Ephesians 2:10, which Laura and Dr. Clinton just discussed we read the following, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." What an incredible reality that we have to hold onto as followers of Christ. I hope that you've been encouraged by these last two episodes of Family Talk. If you missed any of Dr. Tim Clinton's conversation with Laura Story, or would like to request a CD copy of the two part program to keep or to share, just visit drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And when you're there, you'll also find information about Laura Story, her award-winning music and her latest book called *So Long, Normal*. Again, that web address is drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

Now, before we leave for it today, I'd like to remind you that during the month of June, you have the opportunity to double your impact in reaching families with the gospel. Because of the generosity of a number of our friends here at Family Talk, we've been given a matching grant of \$300,000. That means your gift of any amount to the Dobson Family Institute or to Family Talk this month will be doubled. Your financial support enables us to help couples grow closer and enjoy deeper intimacy than they've ever experienced. We also encourage and equip parents so they can stay engaged with their kids and help them grow and to godly adults.

But remember this match only lasts through the end of the month of June, so please consider making a contribution today to give online, visit drjamesdobson.org or to give over the phone you can call (877) 732-6825 Thanks so much for your prayers and your financial support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute and Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, may God continue to richly bless you and your family as you continue to grow deeper in your relationship with Him.

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

Dr. Tim Clinton: Well, hello everyone, this is Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host of Family Talk, a division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Dr. Dobson recently shared a brief message regarding his wife, Shirley, with the staff and constituents, and wanted me to share that message with you, our listening audience. Here are his words.

“Dear Friends, You may have heard that my precious wife, Shirley, tripped over a rug in our kitchen a few weeks ago and fell hard. She broke her right hip and fractured her femur, requiring major surgery two days later. That is a very painful and consequential injury, as I’m sure you know. I have been by her bedside ever since. She is out of the hospital now and receiving treatment in a rehab facility near our home. She is getting physical therapy and 24 hour care. Shirley had her first post-op exam with her surgeon a couple of days ago, and he was very encouraged by the progress she has made.” He goes on to say. “There have been no complications and we are grateful for the prayers of many friends.

Please do continue to pray for this great lady. She joins me in wanting to convey our appreciation for the cards and flowers sent to us at this stressful time. This too shall pass. Your friend, Jim Dobson.”

On behalf of the entire team here at Family Talk, I hope you will join with us in praying for the Dobson family, and for a continued speedy recovery for Shirley Dobson. As always, we love being a part of your life.