



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Toxic War on Masculinity – Part 1

Guest(s): Nancy Pearcey

Air Date: June 12, 2024

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Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute, supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

Nancy Pearcey: You're at a funeral, and in the eulogy, somebody says, "He was a good man." What does that mean? All around the world, young men had no trouble answering that. They would immediately start listing duty, honor, integrity, sacrifice, do the right thing, look out for the little guy, be a provider, be a protector, be responsible. And the sociologist said, "Well, where'd you learn that?" Or you and I would say, "They are made in God's image." They do have an innate, inherent, intrinsic knowledge. In their heart of hearts, they do know what the good man is.

Roger Marsh: Well, those were some thought-provoking words by today's guest, Nancy Pearcey. Join me now as we delve into an insightful conversation about the war on masculinity.

Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and on today's program, I'll be sitting in the co-host seat. Now, you probably know me as the voice of Family Talk. I'm also a radio show host, an ordained minister, and a published author.

Well, this program that we're doing today is being recorded at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention in Nashville Tennessee. And we are currently in the midst of thousands of industry leaders and decision makers within the Christian media community, gathered together to learn and share, and ultimately serve God's kingdom by sharing His word.

Now, in our culture today, it seems like there is an active vendetta against men and masculinity. Over the years, there have been numerous books and articles written, and they have titles like, "Why Can't We Hate Men?," and "I Hate Men," and "Are Men Necessary?," and "No Good Men?"

Well, you may have heard the term toxic masculinity tossed around from cultural commentators, and celebrities and political figures as well. No matter where you turn, there has been a real beat down on men. Well, today's guest

has written a book that addresses this war on masculinity. Her name is Nancy Pearcey. Nancy is a professor and scholar in residence at Houston Christian University, where she holds the Elizabeth and John Gibson Endowed Chair in Apologetics. Nancy has published over 100 articles in national media outlets, and is the best-selling author of several books entitled, *Love Thy Body*, *Total Truth*, and *How Now Shall We Live?* Her newest title is *The Toxic War on Masculinity: How Christianity Reconciles the Sexes*, which we're going to be diving into today. Nancy and her husband have two grown sons and reside in Houston, Texas.

Well, welcome to Family Talk, Professor Nancy Pearcey. We are so delighted to have you here. And Dr. Dobson and his wife Shirley send their regards as well.

Nancy Pearcey: Thanks. Thank you so much for having me.

Roger Marsh: And so does Michele Bachmann, as we were having a conversation about it. When I came across the title, *Total Truth*, you were sharing a story with us before we began about that connection. Share that story with us, if you would.

Nancy Pearcey: Yes. When Michele Bachmann was running for President, she publicly said that her thinking had been shaped by my earlier book, *Total Truth*. And of course, then she was jumped on by hostile media people, who went out and looked at the book and said, "This is the book that Michele Bachmann said shaped her thinking on politics.", and wrote articles. There was an article in the *New Yorker* mentioning *Total Truth*. And I forget, there was one more. But there were two articles attacking her for reading *Total Truth*. And so, that was kind of funny. And I did write a defense, actually. I wrote a defense for a publication called Human Events saying, "Here's my actual argument in *Total Truth*." Because it was about how Christians should bring their faith into every area of life, including politics, that we should have a complete total worldview.

Roger Marsh: I love that. Those are the kinds of badges of honor that we wear, even though the Left is trying to attack you for something that's biblical, right, and true. For those who don't know your background, Nancy, how did you come to faith?

Nancy Pearcey: I love it when people start with that question. Because it seems like the older I get, the more I appreciate that God got hold of me. And so, when I speak publicly now, I always start with my testimony.

Roger Marsh: I think that's great.

Nancy Pearcey: So I was raised in a Christian home. It was a Lutheran home. And you may not know this, but all Scandinavians are Lutheran, the way that all Irish are Catholic.

Roger Marsh: Right.

Nancy Pearcey: Apparently, a lot of people don't know that. So we were ethnic Scandinavians.

Roger Marsh: Okay. Culturally, yeah.

Nancy Pearcey: And so yeah, it was more of a cultural faith. And when I became a teenager and I started asking questions, my parents had no answers. All I wanted to know was, I had one question really, how do we know Christianity is true?

I'm attending a public high school, all my teachers are secular, all my textbooks are secular, and I just wanted to know, how do we know Christianity is true?

Roger Marsh: It's a fair question.

Nancy Pearcey: I think every young person should ask it.

Roger Marsh: Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Nancy Pearcey: Make it their own. Well, unfortunately, they had no answers. And so, I talked to a Christian university professor. I asked him point-blank, "Why are you a Christian?" He said, "Works for me."

Roger Marsh: Whoa. Okay.

Nancy Pearcey: I said, "That's it?" And so, I realized I don't have any good reasons for believing Christianity. And it seemed like a matter of intellectual honesty to me, that if you don't have good reasons for something, you shouldn't say you believe it.

Roger Marsh: Right.

Nancy Pearcey: Whether it's Christianity or anything. So I wasn't rebellious, I just-

Roger Marsh: You were curious.

Nancy Pearcey: I was curious. I like that.

Roger Marsh: Yeah.

Nancy Pearcey: And so, I very consciously set aside my religious upbringing, and decided it was up to me to find truth. And that's actually when I started walking down the hallway to the library in the public high school I attended, and pulling books off the philosophy shelf.

Roger Marsh: Wow.

Nancy Pearcey: Because I thought, "If I can't get any adults to talk to me about this, isn't that their job?"

Roger Marsh: Well, especially people of faith. I mean, I'm sitting here thinking to myself, 1 Peter 3:15, it says, "Always be prepared to give an answer." And the answers you got were, "Works for me.", and "Don't worry about it." What?

Nancy Pearcey: And that's why I turned to philosophy. It was not an academic interest.

Roger Marsh: Okay.

Nancy Pearcey: It was a deep personal search for truth. And I thought, "Maybe that's their job." That, what is truth? How do we know it is a foundation for ethics? Or is it just true for me, true for you? Is there any purpose of meaning to life? And I soon realized that if there was no God, the answer was no to all of those questions.

Roger Marsh: Right. Right.

Nancy Pearcey: In fact, I realized there was not even a foundation for knowledge. The way I thought of it was, if all I have is my puny brain, in the vast scope of time and history, what makes me think I could have some kind of universal transcendent truth? Ridiculous.

Roger Marsh: Right.

Nancy Pearcey: And so, by the time I graduated from high school, I had absorbed all these isms, moral relativism, and skepticism, and even determinism. In my science classes, I was taught that we were just biochemical machines anyway.

Roger Marsh: Yeah.

Nancy Pearcey: So I was very secular, and I went to Europe. We had lived when I was a child, and I'd gone back. And so sort of by chance, I ended up at L'Abri, which is the ministry of Francis Schaeffer in Switzerland.

Roger Marsh: Just by chance.

Nancy Pearcey: I know.

Roger Marsh: Isn't God fun?

Nancy Pearcey: Well, some people say, "Why would you go to a Christian place if you weren't Christian?" I had some relatives who were traveling across Europe and were stopping at L'Abri as tourists, and said, "Come see us."

Roger Marsh: Yes.

Nancy Pearcey: I went to see my family members not to see L'Abri, no interest in Christianity at the time.

Roger Marsh: Oh. Hand of Providence once again. You know?

Nancy Pearcey: And L'Abri, by the way, it's in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, so it means the shelter.

Roger Marsh: Okay.

Nancy Pearcey: But that was the first time I encountered Christian apologetics. I had no idea that Christianity could be supported by good reasons, and arguments, and evidence. That it could stand its own against the secular isms that I had absorbed by then. And I was completely blown away. In fact, I was so impressed that I left. The first time I was there I left, because I was afraid that I might give in because it was so attractive. It was so appealing. I'd never seen such an attractive form of Christianity.

Roger Marsh: So this started as a natural curiosity for you, but then when it became spiritual, your intellect took over and said, "Wait, I don't want to give into that."

Nancy Pearcey: Well, it was a little bit more than that. Christianity had let me down once already.

Roger Marsh: Okay. Okay. Okay. There's that piece. Sure.

Nancy Pearcey: It had not answered my questions. And so, I was not going to go back unless I was absolutely intellectually convinced that it was true.

Roger Marsh: Okay.

Nancy Pearcey: And I didn't want to be drawn in emotionally, because L'Abri was a very attractive place.

Roger Marsh: Yeah. Yeah.

Nancy Pearcey: And then, you'll appreciate this. I was there in 1971, and everyone there was hippies.

Roger Marsh: Yeah.

Nancy Pearcey: But actually, I looked around and I thought, "Who are these Christians that they can talk to hippies?" Because nobody yet was reaching across that cultural divide.

Roger Marsh: It was a whole division. Yeah.

Nancy Pearcey: Yeah.

Roger Marsh: Wow.

Nancy Pearcey: To these disaffected young people. So that meant these Christians had something going for them. Anyway, because I had discovered apologetics then, I found C.S. Lewis, and Chesterton and Os Guinness was teaching at L'Abri at that time.

Roger Marsh: Oh, wow.

Nancy Pearcey: Yeah. So I met him then. And so just on my own, through my own reading, I decided I actually am now. I'm intellectually convinced it's true. I've read enough. And then I thought, "Where do I find other Christians?" Because I wasn't into church or anything.

Roger Marsh: Right.

Nancy Pearcey: I was just reading on my own.

Roger Marsh: Yeah.

Nancy Pearcey: So I thought, "Okay, I knew some at L'Abri."

Roger Marsh: Those hippies? Do they have anything to say?

Nancy Pearcey: There's hippies at L'Abri. Those Jesus freaks. And so, a year and a half later, I went back. And that's when I stayed for four months, and really got grounded in Christian worldview. And that's what shaped all my writing and teaching since then as an apologist. I just have such a heart for young people who have the kind of questions that I had. I was kind of abandoned to my questions. And so, I want to come alongside young people.

Roger Marsh: Well, I'm glad your curiosity got the best of you in this regard, Nancy Pearcey, because this is one of the things that I've heard from a number of years of youth ministry, the idea that kids who are bringing questions to church about culture, and the church is not giving them answers. I remember one time counseling at a youth camp, and two of our kids were going to get kicked out for smoking marijuana. They had a smoking section. And so, I was called by the senior pastor who said, "Make sure those boys don't come back to the youth group." And I said, "Pastor, with all due respect, there's more reason for them to be in the youth group now than ever before." And he said, "Well, how are you going to handle the situation with marijuana?" And I said, "Well, they're smoking pot. Okay, so we need to talk to them about why they're following this, and why it's a gateway drug, and et cetera, et cetera."

So you're asking these questions, and you're now speaking into a new issue with this toxic war on masculinity that is getting to the courts. It's a huge topic to take, and I love the fact that when you talk about toxic masculinity, there's some terms we have to define, but you're not just looking at the last 30 years or

the last 40 years, the microcosm. As they used to say in the cartoons, "You set the way back machine all the way to the industrial revolution."

First of all, let's talk about what toxic masculinity is and what it isn't. It's kind of become a popular buzzword in the culture right now.

Nancy Pearcey: Yeah. I like the fact that you started with some of the headlines that I actually used in my book. Like, *Why Can't We Hate Men?* That was an article in the *Washington Post*.

Roger Marsh: Wow.

Nancy Pearcey: And I thought, "Really? In a respected mainstream publication?" A Huffington Post editor tweeted hashtag Kill All Men. You can buy T-shirts that say, "So many men, so little ammunition." And even men have jumped on the bandwagon. A male author wrote, "Talking about healthy masculinity is like talking about healthy cancer." And you may have seen this, because it was in the news, the director of the movie *Avatar*, James Cameron.

Roger Marsh: James Cameron. Yeah.

Nancy Pearcey: Do you remember? He said, "Testosterone is a toxin. You have to work it out of your system."

Roger Marsh: Yeah.

Nancy Pearcey: So my goal in the book was to say, "Look, why does the secular world get its concept of masculinity so wrong, that it even thinks masculinity is toxic?" So it's a kind of cultural apologetic, right?. We're looking at why is the secular culture wrong, and how can we respond to that effectively with a biblical worldview?

Roger Marsh: And I don't want to sound trite. You're not trying to win an argument here. You're really getting to the core of, what is the issue? What is masculinity? What's toxic masculinity? Why is one good? Why is one not good? And how did we get so far off the rails? And it wasn't just like one incident, or Betty Friedan, or any of the feminists of the 70s, who said, "A woman without a man's like a dog without a bicycle." It's not that, it's something much deeper than that, and the church has the answer for it.

Nancy Pearcey: Yeah. Most people do think it started with feminism in the 70s or so. But I look back to, where did the language describing men first turn negative? It turns out it's much further back. It is the industrial revolution. Before that, men worked alongside the wives and children all day, on the family farm, the family business, the family industry. And so surprisingly, most books on parenting were written to fathers, not to mothers, as they are today. And fathers did spend as much time with their kids as mothers did. Sons especially were virtually apprentices in their father's trade or his business. What I find fun is, even secular historians will

say this. They say, "The concept of masculine virtue at that time was duty to God and man." I love that.

Roger Marsh: Yeah.

Nancy Pearcey: So the question is, where did we lose that?

Roger Marsh: Right.

Nancy Pearcey: So the industrial revolution took work out of the home, and for the first time, men were not working alongside family members, people they loved and had a moral bond with. Instead, they were working as individuals in competition with other men. And people began to say, "Men are changing." This is the first time you see people start to say, "They're losing their caretaking ethos. They're becoming egocentric, self-seeking, career-driven, greedy, and acquisitive.", to use the language of the day. And I was surprised how often they even said things like, "They're starting to turn their career into an idol." And so, this is when the language changed.

And so, if you want to have a solution, you've got to look at what happened then. Men were alienated from their family members throughout the day. We forget what a big shock that was. Today we're so used to it, right?

Roger Marsh: Right.

Nancy Pearcey: But at the time, books and articles were written on, we've lost the core of the family. The father's no longer here.

Roger Marsh: Amazing.

Nancy Pearcey: 1842, an article in a magazine called *Parents Magazine* said, "The greatest cause of domestic sorrow today is father absence. That the father's working late and early, and has no time to perform his duties to his children."

Roger Marsh: Wow. 1842.

Nancy Pearcey: And it's about the same time the head of the Women's Christian Temperance Union wrote a book in which she said, "The father is a prototype of God, because God is our father." But the prototype of the Divine is gone from Sunday to Sunday practically.

Roger Marsh: Wow. Wow.

Nancy Pearcey: So there was a lot of outcry against fathers. Family felt gutted. It felt hollowed out.

Roger Marsh: And this is a societal change you're talking about, Nancy Pearcey, not just a Christian families are complaining about this. American families were complaining about this.

Nancy Pearcey: That's right. And so, it does suggest what the solution is. The solution is how can we, even in an industrial age, can we reconnect fathers to their families? And so, I do have a whole chapter on ways that we can flex the workplace to allow fathers to have more time.

And the pandemic was actually a game changer. Harvard University did a study, it came out after my book, so it's not in there. Harvard University did a study. They said, "During the pandemic, 68% of fathers said they got closer to their children, and they don't want to lose that."

Roger Marsh: Wow.

Nancy Pearcey: They would prefer to keep some sort of hybrid arrangement, so they can have more time with their kids. And of course, we've got to convince corporates and businesses too. So I have quotes from CEOs saying, "We were kind of suspicious of remote work. We thought people would fluff off. We did not see any decrease in productivity during this pandemic."

Roger Marsh: Interesting.

Nancy Pearcey: And even, I have some cool quotes where they say, "If you let fathers have time to be better fathers, they actually make better workers." They are more productive. They're more focused, because they want to preserve their time with their kids, and they end up being better workers as a result.

Roger Marsh: Wow. Nancy Pearcey's book is *The Toxic War on Masculinity: How Christianity Reconciles the Sexes*. And we're talking about how the war on masculinity began. It started much earlier than we might want to believe, or what we've been told in the newspapers, and in the magazines, and in the websites, and the bloggers. Of course, all the copy and paste bandits that go out there and take bad information and spread it as quickly as they possibly can. You've been talking about the need for men, for masculinity in the culture. It's easy to see that men are just slipping badly.

Talk for just a moment about what your research indicates, how bad the situation really is. Not just from the bumper sticker theology, and meme theology of T-shirts and web postings, but what's really happening in families right now.

Nancy Pearcey: Yeah. It is much worse than I realized when I started the research. Men and boys are falling behind at all levels. Boys start falling behind in kindergarten, because they don't have as good fine motor control, so they can't work a scissors as well. So already they feel like they're falling behind the girls, and they

fall behind in both grades and test scores all the way through high school. In college, do you realize that college is now 60% female and 40% male? When I started at Houston, it's now Houston Christian, it was Houston Baptist, we were 70/30.

Roger Marsh: And that was 10 years ago.

Nancy Pearcey: Mm-hmm.

Roger Marsh: Yeah. Okay.

Nancy Pearcey: And you know what we did? We started a football team, and we started an engineering school.

Roger Marsh: Wow.

Nancy Pearcey: To attract more male students.

Roger Marsh: I've talked to a couple of leaders in Christian university world who say, "The only reason we have a football team is to attract more male students. I mean, we don't care. We're not going to be good. We're not going to be competitive. But you've got 53 spots on the roster, and some junior varsity and walk-on players, it gives them a chance." Have we gotten to the point in the culture, Nancy Pearcey, where young men think, "If I'm not doing something like that, I really don't belong in college."? I mean, there was a time when a young man didn't have to go to college, and you could find a trade, and you could have a good life and raise a family. And now, it seems like those days are gone.

Nancy Pearcey: That's true. And we have to realize too, why women pulled ahead, and that is because they were given a lot of opportunities. 1972, Title IX. 1994, Gender Equity Act. Millions of dollars have been poured into equity workshops, and curricula, and training materials. And the idea was, we're going to pull girls up to where boys are. Nobody realized that no, they would charge right past, so that they're now doing much better than boys at all levels of education. So now we have to go back and think, "Well, maybe we should have some programs for boys."

Roger Marsh: Interesting.

Nancy Pearcey: If it worked for girls, maybe we should have some programs. And unfortunately, it's been a bit difficult to persuade people.

The first book on the subject, you may have read it, *The War Against Boys*, by Christina Hoff Sommers.

Roger Marsh: Right.

Nancy Pearcey: Right. When that came out, it was jumped on by feminists who said, "No, no, no. We can't help boys. Boys end up being CEOs, and Fortune 500 company bosses, and Hollywood film producers, so they don't need any help." The actual numbers show though that yeah, that might be, at most, the top 10%. On average, men and boys are falling behind.

So after school, we discussed education. After school, men are falling behind now, in terms of both where they used to be and relative to women. In terms of higher levels of suicide, drug and alcohol addiction, homelessness, mental illness, unemployment. It's not showing up in their normal employment statistics, because they've stopped looking for work. So research has dug deeper, and they now tell us that male unemployment is at Great Depression era levels.

Roger Marsh: Whoa.

Nancy Pearcey: Yeah. I was shocked.

Roger Marsh: That's amazing.

Nancy Pearcey: Great Depression era levels. And life expectancy has gone down. Women's have stayed the same, but male life expectancy has gone down. So that a magazine called The New Scientist did an article on this research and it said, "The major demographic factor now in early death is being male."

Roger Marsh: Whoa.

Nancy Pearcey: So I say, it's time to have some compassion on men. Stop the negativity, and start looking at ways that we can encourage and support men.

Roger Marsh: One of the things that you do bring up in the book is, it's both, and not an either or, in a situation like this. There shouldn't be a toxic war on masculinity. We've seen where that started. But now where we see where we are in terms of trying to course correct, and I'm sure there were a lot of women who are very grateful for more educational opportunities that they wouldn't have had.

I remember sharing with Dr. that my daughter Kaylee was applying for graduate school at USC, and Doctor's response was, "Wow, that's amazing that a young woman is being considered for the sciences. When I was at USC, they would've looked at her application and just thrown it away. They would not have even considered a woman for a PhD in a science." And nowadays, it's who's the best candidate, which is great. Now you've got more women excelling, and you've got men falling behind. And for some reason, like you mentioned, if you had taken every statistic that you just mentioned and replaced the word male with female, there would be a national outcry. But because it's like that with men, it sounds like what we're hearing in the culture is, "Good. It's about time. Women

have had it tough for such a long time. This is the only way we're going to course correct." You would respectfully disagree with that assessment.

Nancy Pearcey: Well, now we're seeing women who can't find men to marry. If you've got everything we just said about men falling behind, mental illness, homelessness, et cetera, means that there's women who are not finding good men to marry. Men's problems turn into women's problems. And that's why women should, well, we should care anyway, right? Just out of altruism, because we love our neighbor as ourselves. But women need to care also, because it means that they're not finding men to marry. There was an article in a British newspaper called *The Guardian* just recently, and it said, "Women are not finding good men." Quote, unquote.

Roger Marsh: Marriageable men.

Nancy Pearcey: And it's like, well, that's because they're falling behind on so many areas, and it's not helping when you just use negative language to attack men. Women suffer as well when men suffer. Our fates are tied together. You can't have a well-being for one sex without well-being for the other sex.

Roger Marsh: And that's something that only faith in Christ and the Bible will actually help us reconcile. And that's the subtopic of your most recent book, *The Toxic War on Masculinity*.

Nancy, we've come up against the clock here. We're out of time for today, but there's so much more to get into in this conversation. Can you come back tomorrow, and we'll continue this conversation then?

Nancy Pearcey: I'd love to. Thank you.

Roger Marsh: Well, I am Roger Marsh, here once again to remind you to be sure to join us again tomorrow, when you'll hear the conclusion of my conversation with our special guest, Nancy Pearcey, talking about *The Toxic War on Masculinity*.

By the way, if you'd like to learn more about Nancy Pearcey and her outstanding book, called *The Toxic War on Masculinity*, simply visit our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

Well, you've probably noticed the Father's Day themed cards and gifts in stores these days. That's right, Father's Day is coming up this Sunday. And this is a time when a lot of us will be thinking about our dads, whether they're still with us or with the Lord. Or maybe that father figure in our lives who was there for us, and had a huge positive impact on us.

At the same time, however, for many people, Father's Day is a time that rekindles the father wounds they've experienced. Whether Dad was in the home or not, their relationship may have been troubled or damaged. Here at

the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, it's our goal to walk alongside men, to help them become the great fathers that our kids need them to be, and to set Godly examples for their whole families. Now, if you or someone you know is in that fathering season right now, and would like some encouragement, and tips on how to invest in the lives of your children, I encourage you to sign up for our new free five-day email series called, Dads, it's time to step up. To sign up, all you have to do is click the link at the bottom of today's broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

And finally, before we leave the air for today, another resource I'd like to share with you is specifically for fathers and sons. It's a brand new unique devotional created by Mark Hancock and the team at Trail Life USA. Mark is the CEO there. The book is entitled *Trail-Ready: 101 Devotions for Dads with Boys*. And we'll be happy to send you a copy of this devotional, either for yourself or for your dad, or for the special father figure in your life. All you have to do to receive it is to visit our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk, and click the link at the bottom of today's broadcast page. We'll send you a copy of *Trail-Ready: 101 Devotions for Dads with Boys*, as our way of thanking you for your donation of any amount in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute today. So make sure you contact us at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk, or give us a call at 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825.

I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for making Family Talk a part of your day. And be sure to join us again tomorrow, when Nancy Pearcey returns for part two of her conversation on *The Toxic War on Masculinity*. That's coming up next time right here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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