



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Quiet Times for Busy Parents

Guest(s): Shirley Dobson

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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: Being a parent truly is a gift. There are so many blessings that come with raising a child. I'm Roger Marsh, and I know from experience that having kids is wonderful and it's an exciting calling. However, as Dr. James Dobson has eloquently pointed out, and I think that most parents would agree, parenting isn't for cowards. It's a huge task that consumes at least two decades of a parent's life. That time commitment is completely worth it though. But it is important that parents remember to take time every day to be encouraged and edified by scripture. You have to make sure that you are parenting by faith, not by fear and stress.

Now, Dr. Dobson and his bride, Shirley, celebrated their 61st wedding anniversary just this past Friday. That is definitely cause for celebration. And they managed to raise two kids along the way to know, serve and love the Lord. Not to mention they help countless more parents raise up kids through their ministry of prayer and encouragement, providing us with timeless resources, such as Dr. Dobson's books *Dare to Discipline* and *The Strong-Willed Child*. In honor of their marriage, today here on Family Talk, we are airing a broadcast that the two of them recorded together.

Today's program centers around their book, *Night Light for Parents*. *Night Light for Parents* and its prequel, *Night Light for Couples*, were written by Jim and Shirley specifically for busy husbands and wives who barely have time to do laundry much less sit down and read a lengthy devotional together. The Dobson's understand the importance of taking time for even just five to 10 minutes with your spouse, or if you're a single parent to do something on your own, to meditate on God's word and be encouraged in your parenting journey. Let's listen in now as our favorite couple talk about this helpful book on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Shirley, talk about this book, *Night Light for Parents*.

Shirley Dobson: I was so proud of *Night Light*, our first book when it came out, but I have to say, I think I'm almost more proud of this book because parenting is such a hard job. I don't think any moms and dads out there would deny that. And sometimes you wonder whether you made the right decision to even have kids. And this book, I think, will give parents an inspiration. It will help them value their children and their role as a parent, and also it gives a lot of spiritual guidance for parents and their children. So I'm very excited about this.

Dr. James Dobson: This *Night Light for Parents* is a sequel to *Night Light* and it follows the same general format. In fact, to give credit where credit is due, Jim Lund assisted us. I want to tip my hat to Jim. He was involved in both *Night Light* and *Night Light for Parents*. Both of these books are designed to be read in 10 minutes per day for couples to share together. Or if the reader is single, to get the information for himself or herself. And it begins with a scripture that's related to the theme of the day, and then that's followed by a high interest story or a thought. And then we offer some suggestions for questions and answers that the couple can share together. And then it ends with a prayer. And because it is done so quickly when people are tired, frankly, at the end of the day, it provides just a little substance on which to go to sleep at night.

Shirley Dobson: You know, Jim, I just had a thought. Instead of trying to describe this book in the abstract, why don't we just take one of the pages, a short one and just read it to our listeners?

Dr. James Dobson: Okay. Well, which one you going to choose?

Shirley Dobson: Let's see. I'm going to choose page 140, which the title is "The Power of Words." And it starts out with a scripture related to the topic. "The tongue has the power of life and death." Proverbs 18:21. It's a story about a teenager named Josh. "Josh, a typical teenager in most respects differed from his friends and at least one quite noticeable way. He had a large birthmark that covered much of his face. His unusual appearance, however, it didn't seem to affect him. Josh related well with his peers and didn't act at all self-conscious. A family friend eventually put his curiosity about this into words. 'Josh, you must be aware of the large birthmark on your face.', he said, 'Can you tell me why it doesn't seem to bother you in the slightest?'

Josh smiled and said, 'When I was young, my father started telling me that my birthmark was there for two reasons. One, it was where the angel kissed me. Two, the angel had done that so my father could always find me easily in a crowd. My dad told me this so many times that as I grew up, I began to feel sorry for the other kids who weren't kissed by an angel.'" Words are an extremely potent tool. And those spoken by the people we love carry the most weight of all. Let's heed the instruction of scripture, "Encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today", Hebrews 3:13, and use the power of words to bless our children at every opportunity.

Dr. James Dobson: That's a neat story. And it is followed by a section that we call "Before You Say Goodnight." On each page, there's that section that poses the questions that couples might want to ask one another or a single mother or a single dad might ask themselves. Here are the three questions that were posed on page 140 in the section, "The Power of Words." Do you consistently encourage your children through your words and actions? How could you be even more effective? And how can you model encouragement to each other so your kids will see it in action?

Shirley Dobson: And then it ends with a prayer, and I'd like to read the prayer at the bottom. Of course, parents can interject their own prayer. But this is one if they're too tired to be creative. "Father, show us how to use the power of words to bring encouragement, comfort, and confidence into our children's lives. Restrain us from words that hurt, and guide our tongues to bring words of light and lasting hope into our home. Amen."

Dr. James Dobson: Well, let me go from there, Shirley, to another page or two from the book, and there is a longer story that's provided for Sunday and it provides the theme for that week. And that's usually written by somebody else. In other words, we borrowed stories from other people, and this is a story that was written by Steve Farrar. And this piece is entitled "Standing Tall."

"When I was a sophomore in high school, we moved to a new town and to a new high school. It was the typical scenario of being a new kid who doesn't know anyone. One of the fastest ways to make friends in a situation like this is to go out for a sport. In about two days you know more guys from playing ball than you could meet in three months of going to school. Now, normally I would have gone out for basketball, but I had done something very foolish. I had brought home a D on my last report card. The only reason I'd gotten a D was that I had horsed around in the class and basically exhibited some very irresponsible behavior in turning in my papers.

My dad had a rule for the three boys in our family. If any of us got anything lower than a C in a class, we couldn't play ball. He didn't demand that we get straight A's or that we make the honor roll. But my dad knew that the only reason any of us would get a D was that we were fooling around instead of being responsible. As a result, I didn't go out for basketball. Now, my dad was all for me playing ball. He had been all state in both basketball and football in high school. He went to college and onto a basketball scholarship. And after World War II was offered a contract to play football for the Pittsburgh Steelers. He wanted me to play, but he was more interested in developing my character than he was in developing my jump shot.

One day in my physical education class, we were playing basketball. I didn't know it, but the varsity coach was in the bleachers watching the pickup game. After we went into the locker room, he came up to me and asked me who I was and why I wasn't out for varsity basketball. I told him that we had just recently moved into town and that I'd come out for basketball next year. He said that he

wanted me to come out this year. I told him that my dad had a rule about getting any grade lower than a C. The coach said, 'But according to school rules, you're still eligible to play if you have just one D.' 'Yes, sir. I realize that.', I replied. 'But you have to understand that my dad has his own eligibility rules.' 'What's your phone number?', the coach asked. 'I'm going to call your dad.' 'Well, I'll be happy to give you the phone number, but it'll be a waste of your time.', I said.

The coach was a big aggressive guy. He was about six feet, two inches and 220 pounds, which put him one inch shorter and 20 pounds lighter than my dad. Coach was used to getting his way, but he hadn't met my dad. I knew before the coach ever called what my dad's answer would be. Was my dad capable of change? Sure he was. Was he going to change because he got a call from the varsity coach? Of course not. That night after dinner, dad told me the coach had called. He told me that he had told the coach no. He then reminded me of the importance of being responsible in class and that he really wanted me to play basketball, but the ball was in my court. No pun intended. If I wanted to play, it was up to me. At that point, I was very motivated to work hard in class so that I could play basketball the next season.

The next morning, the coach came up to me in the locker room. 'I talked to your dad yesterday afternoon and he wouldn't budge. I explained the school eligibility rules, but he wouldn't change his mind. I don't have very much respect for your father.' I couldn't believe my ears. This coach didn't respect my father. Even I had enough sense to know that my dad was doing the right thing. Sure, I wanted to play ball. But I knew that my dad was a man of his word and that he was right in not letting me play. I couldn't believe this coach would say such a thing. 'Coach', I said, 'I can tell you that I highly respect my dad. And I also want you to know that I will never play basketball for you.' I never did. I got my grades up, but I never went out for varsity basketball. I refused to play for a man who didn't respect my dad for doing what was right.

That was the end of my high school basketball career because that man coached basketball for my remaining years in high school. Come to think of it, the real reason I wouldn't join his team was that I didn't respect him. He was a compromiser and I suspected that he would do anything to win. My dad was a man of conviction and a man of character and any coach who couldn't see that was not the kind of man I wanted to associate with. My dad was strict and unwilling to change his conviction even though it hurt him for me not to play ball. My dad was capable of change, but he was unwilling to change because he had a long-term objective for my life that the coach didn't have. The coach wanted to win games, my dad wanted to build a son."

Shirley Dobson:

You know, Jim, so many of us want our kids to be superstars and we want them to shine in school. It would have been so easy for that dad to have bent the rules a little bit. But he held firm and I wonder how many parents out there cave in under that kind of pressure. And I respect that father too. And even more, I

respect that son for not even going out the next year because that coach was so rude to the father.

Dr. James Dobson: That's the moral of this story. Steve had character built into him, probably got it from his mom and dad. But that character that the father was trying to build in this instance was already there. And we saw it in the way Steve responded to that situation. Let me press on here because I want to make sure that people understand what this book is all about. Its primary purpose is not devoted to the how-tos of parenting. And there's a lot of that here. But the primary purpose is to help parents introduce their children to Jesus Christ. Without question, that is the most important responsibility in life. Not only the most important thing we're trying to do as moms and dads. But there's nothing that even comes close to that in significance, because if you don't win your kids to Christ, you'll never see them again after you die. And we've got all of eternity to celebrate together if you get that job done. And yet in this day and age, it is very difficult to accomplish that. And you've got to give it your best effort.

The best-known Christian pollster in the country is George Barna. And he recently came out with one of his studies that shows that children between five and 13 have a 32% chance of accepting Christ as savior. And that's kind of low, but at least there is that probability there. The rate drops to just 4% for kids between 14 and 18. In other words, you don't get that job done very often during the teen years. And for those young men and women who have not become Christians before the age of 19, have only a 6% probability of doing so during the rest of their lives.

Shirley Dobson: You know, Jim, that reminds me of my growing up years. I believe our listeners know, I've said it in various articles and magazines, that my home life was dysfunctional. My real father was an alcoholic and there was a divorce when I was 12 years of age. And I prayed for my father for 40 years that he would come to know the Lord. And just before he died, he had a stroke and he understood what was being said to him, but he couldn't talk. But before he had that stroke, I visited with him and I said, "Dad, we haven't had much of a relationship on this earth because since the divorce you've lived so far away. But we could have all eternity together, but we're not going to the same place." And he said, "Well, I don't believe in life after death. I believe you just go to sleep and that's all there is." And I said, "But dad, what if the Bible is true?" And he said, "Well, that's just a risk I'm going to have to take." I said, "Dad, you're risking all of eternity."

But I just couldn't seem to break through. And so I left and flew home. But I left him a Bible and I prayed with him and then I continued praying for him. But just before he died, a pastor that I had called went over there every day. And I have reason to believe that before he died, that he did receive Christ as a savior. But the point of all of this is that when I was a young child and the divorce happened, my mother had the wisdom to know that she needed divine help in raising my brother and me. And she enrolled us in a little evangelical church not very far from our home. And that's where I learned about Jesus. And I learned that He knew me by name, that He had seen every tear, that He heard every

prayer. And I was a very young girl at that time. And I do believe that if we don't introduce our kids to Christ at a young age, it becomes very difficult.

Dr. James Dobson: It becomes very difficult late.

Shirley Dobson: Like with my father, they just get hardened. Their heart gets hard.

Dr. James Dobson: I'm looking at the clock and we're almost through, and there's so much to talk about here. But Shirley, you made reference a few minutes ago to how difficult it is to be a parent today and to get that job done. I would like to ask you to go to your last entry. You have the Saturday from each week. By the way, there's six months worth of these devotionals and instructional pieces. And you have an item on the final Saturday, as I indicated, called "Stages of Life," that addresses the idea of the pressures that are on mothers in particular today. Read at least a portion of that, will you, with the remaining time that we have?

Shirley Dobson: Okay, I'd love to. It's on page 309 and it's called "Stages of Life." And the scripture is, "There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven." Ecclesiastes 3:1.

Let me conclude my contribution to this book by sharing a final thought for women, especially those of you who are a full-time mom. You may well have questions about your identity in a culture that devalues motherhood. This was an issue that troubled me when my children were young. I remember saying to my husband, "I know who you are. But tell me again who I am." Jim, very patiently talked me through those times by reminding me that God had given me the primary responsibility for the care of our two children and our home. "When that brief time is over...", he said, "... He will have new challenges for you to accept. You'll see." With that, I felt affirmed in my commitment to my family and cherished the experience of raising our kids. I gave priority to them during the brief window when their need was greatest. And I'm thankful today for what the Lord accomplished with that effort. I would not change a single day if I had a life to live over.

As it turned out, Jim's words proved to be more prophetic than even he knew. As soon as our youngest child went off to college, the Lord laid on my shoulders the responsibility of calling the nation to its knees by serving as chairman of the National Day of Prayer task force. It would have been impossible for me to handle this heavy assignment while our children were young. But now that my task as a mother and caregiver is completed, God is using me in another fulfilling way. If you are raising small children, either as a full-time mom or as an employed mother, I hope you are not seduced by the popular culture that tells you that you're wasting your time. It's a lie. There is no greater responsibility in living than bringing new little human beings into the world and ultimately introducing them to Jesus Christ. This era will pass in a blink of an eye, yielding to yet another stage of life. As Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes, "There's a time for everything."

And then I listed all the seasons. So you can read that, I won't take time to read that. It's found in Ecclesiastes 3:1-8. This season for child rearing will end before you know it, and your life will change dramatically. Be content with the assignment God has given you for now and do it well. You have the rest of your years to give priority to your other talents in service of the Lord. An entirely new identity will await you in the next phase. But while your boys and girls are small, give them the best you have. You will never regret it.

Dr. James Dobson: What better way to conclude the book than with this message to moms. And the name of the book is *Night Light for Parents*. I hope that some of our listeners will find it interesting and helpful. I pray that they will, and it's my prayer that some children who are out there today will grow up to know Christ and serve him for a lifetime and eternity with him because of what we've tried to write in this book. Shirley, any last word?

Shirley Dobson: Well, Jim, I would just like to say to our listeners out there, this is a love gift from Jim and me to you. We just appreciate all of you so much. It's a tough job that you're trying to do, but with God's help, you will do a great job. And don't look too soon for the person that your child will be.

Dr. James Dobson: Thanks, Shirley, for being on the program today and for collaborating with me. What are we going to write next? Don't mention it.

Shirley Dobson: Let's do daylight for a change.

Roger Marsh: Touching and encouraging words from Dr and Shirley Dobson about their book *Night Light for Parents* on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Now, as I mentioned at the beginning of today's program, *Night Light for Parents* is a companion piece to the book that the Dobson's wrote for married couples called *Night Light for Couples*. If you are in a season of life where you're constantly trying to balance the demands of marriage and family, or if you know someone who is, both of these books would be of tremendous benefit to you. You can request your copy today when you visit our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org. That web address is drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. Or you can give us a call at (877) 732-6825. We're here for you 24 hours a day, seven days a week to answer your questions about the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. We can also recommend a resource for you, and we're happy to pray with you as well. Again, that number to call is (877) 732-6825.

Finally, you can always contact us through the US Mail. We love hearing from you in that way. The mail is also a great way to request a resource or to send a tax deductible donation in support of Family Talk. Our ministry mailing address is The Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado. The zip code 80949. Again, that's the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado. The zip code 80949. Thanks so much for listening to Family Talk today. We appreciate you joining us today and every day here on the program. God's richest blessings to you all as you continue to grow deeper in your relationship with Him.

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

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Roger Marsh: Does your marriage feel disconnected? Are you wanting more one-on-one time with your spouse? This is Roger Marsh for Family Talk. And we have a great resource for you. It's Dr. Dobson's popular work titled *Night Light for Couples*. This devotional is full of insightful content for couples to discuss every night before you go to sleep. Now throughout the book, Dr. Dobson addresses tough marital subjects like finances, communication, intimacy, and more. Rekindle the emotional closeness in your relationship with this helpful resource. Request your copy of *Night Light for Couples* by going to drjamesdobson.org, or call (877) 732-6825.