



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Turning the Tables: Greg Laurie Interviews Dr. James Dobson

Guest(s): Greg Laurie

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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. I'm Roger Marsh. For more than 40 years, Dr. James Dobson has been encouraging and equipping families to stand for righteousness in today's culture. He has guided countless families to model healthy marriages and healthy parent-child relationships as they grow closer to God. Well, joining him on today's program is Pastor Greg Laurie. For nearly three decades, Greg has been leading Harvest Crusades across the United States with nearly 6 million people attending in person at locations like Angel Stadium in Southern California and Madison Square Garden in New York.

In addition, almost 4 million people have attended Harvest events virtually as well over the years. The Harvest Crusades are large scale evangelical events that have touched the lives and hearts of millions. And God has truly used both of these men, Dr. Dobson and Pastor Laurie, in remarkable ways. Well, on today's broadcast, Dr. Dobson and Greg Laurie will sit down to share some stories from their respective journeys. But in this special episode, they will be swapping places as host and guest. So now let's join our special host for today, Greg Laurie and his special guest, our own Dr. James Dobson right now on Family Talk.

Greg Laurie: Hey everybody, this is Pastor Greg Laurie and I have hijacked the studios of Family Talk Radio. I'm holding as my hostage, Dr. James Dobson. No, I'm just kidding. He's not my hostage, but I'm turning the tables-

Dr. James Dobson: We were going to throw you out of here too.

Greg Laurie: I know. I'm turning the tables on the good Doctor today because I want to interview Dr. Dobson a little bit so you can hear a little more of his story. Here's some things you may not know about this familiar voice you hear on the radio every day. First of all, Dr. James Dobson is one of the most influential Christian leaders of this century. God has used him in a remarkable way in my life, in your life and in so many others. Jim Dobson was born in April 21st in 1936 in Shreveport, Louisiana. He earned a Ph.D. in child development at USC. He was an associate clinical professor of pediatrics at the USC School of Medicine for 14

years. He spent 17 years on the staff of the Children's Hospital of Los Angeles in the division of child development in medical genetics. Am I correct so far, doctor?

Dr. James Dobson: I think you got it. Yeah.

Greg Laurie: Okay. And this is interesting, Dr. Dobson has also served government advisory panels and testified at government hearings. He's had a close relationship with multiple presidents. Of course, Dr. Dobson has written many books that we're all well aware of, from *Dare to Discipline* to *Bringing Up Boys*, *Bringing Up Girls*, *The Strong-Willed Child*, *What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women*, *When God Doesn't Make Sense* and many more.

And I would just like to say on a personal note, Dr. Dobson, when our son Christopher went to be with the Lord in 2008, you called me and we spent about an hour on the phone and that familiar voice that has brought encouragement and comfort to so many on the radio, you were there for me and I want to thank you for that. And I want to say God has given you this. Well, first of all, you look great. I mean we're on radio, but people can't see you. You have no wrinkles and you're vibrant and you look like you looked when I saw you about five years ago. Have you found the fountain of youth? There's some special serum we need to know about?

Dr. James Dobson: Well, the Lord's been good to me, Greg, really. I had a heart attack and it was a major heart attack. I had a total blockage of the main artery down the front of my heart. And that means you lose the bottom part of the heart, which is where the pumps are. And my heart is beating like that of a younger man who hasn't had a heart attack. And I've also had a stroke after that. That was eight years later. And I've had prostate cancer and I'm healthy today. Last summer I just decided to see what's going on with me and I went to six doctors. I went to a cardiologist, I went to an ophthalmologist, I went to a dermatologist, I went to the whole route and not one of them found the thing to remark about.

Greg Laurie: Wow.

Dr. James Dobson: And that's just the Lord has just said, "I'm not through with you yet." I guess, I hope.

Greg Laurie: What is the difference between, say, turning 60, then turning 70, then turning 80? How do you see it at that point?

Dr. James Dobson: I don't feel any different. I'm doing the same work that I was doing then, I have the same objectives, which is to serve Christ with all my heart, soul and mind. And I still have a lot of fun in life. I hunt, I fish, I love football.

Greg Laurie: Do you still play tennis?

Dr. James Dobson: I can't play tennis because the heart attack that I had makes it difficult to run. But I exercise every day. And as a matter of fact, on the 14th of December was my 23rd year of every day exercise. I think that may account for some of it.

Greg Laurie: What does a typical day of exercise look like for you?

Dr. James Dobson: It's 45 minutes, mostly on the treadmill. It's mostly cardiovascular. And I just don't allow myself options, I just do it. I'm tired of it, I am bored with it, I wish I didn't have to spend the rest of my life doing that, but if that's what it takes to live another healthy day, I'm willing to do it.

Greg Laurie: That's right. I saw an advertisement in a magazine once a number of years ago. It was a computer magazine selling some product, but I loved the headline. The question was, is it an alarm clock or a calling that gets you out of bed in the morning? And I think for you, it's not an alarm clock, you have passion. And you have this passion now that you had as a much younger man and this passion is maybe not as strong, maybe it's stronger than it's ever been. Would that be an accurate statement?

Dr. James Dobson: There's no question about it. When you see that time is short, and it is for all of us, but as the years go by, you recognize it more. You realize that you don't want to waste a minute, you got things to do because the Lord has called you to do something.

Greg Laurie: That's exactly right.

Dr. James Dobson: And I'm just loving life, Shirley and I are having a great time together and we've got two grandkids that I love like crazy.

Greg Laurie: I love grandchildren.

Dr. James Dobson: I do too.

Greg Laurie: It's been said that grandchildren are the reward for the pain your children put you through. And then it's the punishment on them for what they did to you, right?

Dr. James Dobson: You just hope one of them is strong-willed so they get paid back.

Greg Laurie: Yeah. Didn't you write a book with that title? Now in your biography, *Family Man*, you were quoted to say the two most important things to you are, number one, ensuring your family and loved ones get to Heaven. And number two, living the best possible Christian life. Why are these two things so important to you?

Dr. James Dobson: Well, those are the eternal values. That's what we read in the Scripture and I believe it that we're here for a purpose. It's just to serve the Lord and then do what He has called us to. My great-grandfather found the Lord when he was a

young man and he began praying, he was a minister, began praying that the Lord would become real to each one of four generations yet to come. I'm the fourth generation down and I am the first member of four generations that hasn't been called into the ministry. I would've done it if the Lord asked me to, but He didn't. And so that has been really my life. I'm doing the same thing, I haven't really veered very much from four generations of people who loved the Lord with all their hearts. And I'm very blessed by that.

Greg Laurie: Well, when you think of the name James Dobson, you can't help but think also of Shirley. There's certain names that are so familiar, Ron and Nancy Reagan, Billy and Ruth Graham and James and Shirley Dobson. So for many years, Mrs. Dobson was running the National Day of Prayer. And Vonette Bright was before her, right?

Dr. James Dobson: That's right. Yeah. And Shirley thought when the Lord asked her to handle that responsibility, she said to him in arrogance, "I can do that for a couple of years." And she was there for 25 years and she really did a super job. I'm telling you, that is one great lady. I fell in love with her in college, she was my homecoming queen. It took us three years to get married and we're still loving it, still loving being together. I'm telling you, if I had a weekend to spend with anybody, it would be with Shirley and it would probably be in our house, just the two of us together. She's working on her thing and I'm working on mine. And I never get bored with her. I just don't.

Greg Laurie: Did you meet on the college campus?

Dr. James Dobson: We did, yeah.

Greg Laurie: And do you remember the first thing she said to you?

Dr. James Dobson: Oh yeah, that's an old story.

Greg Laurie: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. I played a lot of tennis in those days and you wear tennis shorts around the campus. And so she was coming toward me and she saw me and she wanted to know me and wasn't sure how to start a conversation. And she got up to me and said, "Hi, legs."

Greg Laurie: Hi, legs?

Dr. James Dobson: I mean, anybody who loves my legs isn't all bad.

Greg Laurie: That's true.

Dr. James Dobson: So that was the beginning.

Greg Laurie: Now, one thing that people may not understand is you started a ministry called Focus on the Family that you directed for many years, but now the name of your ministry is Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: That's right.

Greg Laurie: And that's a very important distinction. God used you and blessed you to launch that incredible ministry of Focus on the Family, but now with Family Talk, you're reaching a whole new generation of people.

Dr. James Dobson: We started from scratch again, which is an interesting thing to do.

Greg Laurie: Now, when we use the word family, I mean, this is a ridiculous question, but in this day and age, it's not so ridiculous. Give us just your best definition of what a family is, A, and B, why a family is important.

Dr. James Dobson: The family is the foundation. It's the ground floor for everything in the culture. It all sits on that foundation. And if you undermine it and you weaken it, you're undermining, you're weakening the foundation. The family was not man's idea or a woman's idea, it wasn't a Christian idea. It came along in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve and the family was God's gift to mankind. And He said, "For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and the two shall be one flesh." That's the beginning of the family. You mess with that foundation. In fact, when the Supreme Court redefined marriage to be anything you want it to be or same sex marriage and who knows where that's going, you are also tampering with the model for the relationship between Christ and the church. And how dare we do that? There was a design to the fundamental relationship between a man and a woman. And we have now tampered with it and I think we're going to pay a price for it if we don't straighten around.

Greg Laurie: The Bible talks about sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind. And I read a quote a while back that said, "A family can survive without a nation, but a nation cannot survive without the family."

Dr. James Dobson: I absolutely believe that's true. Because first of all, you've got the next generation at stake here. And what are they learning? And what are they being taught? And how much stability is there at that level? And if you don't have the family straight and don't have a clear perspective on how it's to be lived, you mess up the next generation. And you know what happens when that occurs. And we've got 5,000 years of history to see what happens when the family begins to disintegrate.

Greg Laurie: Exactly. And if you've just tuned in and you're wondering, who is this guy on with Dr. Dobson? My name is Greg Laurie and it's my privilege today to turn the tables on Dr. Dobson and ask him a few questions. Dr. Dobson, coming back to the family and the breakdown of it. You've talked a lot about fatherless homes. I

came from a fatherless home, I was conceived out of wedlock and I had a bunch of men that called themselves my stepdads. None of them behaved as a stepfather and it sent my life in the wrong direction. And you can almost take every social ill today and trace it to the breakdown of the family, a divorce, and a lack of a father.

Here's just a couple of quick stats. A child that comes from a fatherless home is 68% more likely to use drugs or alcohol, far more likely to become sexually active at an early age and three times more likely to commit a violent crime. 63% of teenagers who attempt suicide live in fatherless homes. 71% of high school dropouts are from fatherless homes. 85% of all youth sitting in prisons grew up in fatherless homes. Fatherless sons are 300% more likely to become incarcerated in state juvenile institutions. And it just goes on and on.

Dr. James Dobson: It does.

Greg Laurie: So God must have known what He was doing when He established a marriage between a man and a woman and created what we call a family.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. That's the way it's designed and that's the way it works best. Most people know that boys need their fathers. I mean, you have to teach those boys how to be men, they're not born knowing that. But what many people don't know is that girls need their dads maybe more than boys do.

Greg Laurie: Why is that?

Dr. James Dobson: Well, they're very sensitive. They're more sensitive, more complicated than boys and they need affirmation. A girl's self-esteem hangs precariously on the relationship between that girl and her father. He's the first one to love her. He's the first male to kiss her or to tell her that she's pretty or to build her up in her own eyes. A father is desperately needed for that. And many men don't get that. They know that they should take their boys fishing and they ought to take them to baseball games and whatever. They don't realize that they're looking past those little girls. We had an organization called The Institute and we brought really bright, smart kids, boys and girls, they were actually juniors and seniors in college, to come to that institute. And when I started writing the book *Bringing Up Girls*, I excluded the boys and I brought in about 25 or 30 girls. And did that on two occasions. I fed them a good meal and then I said, "I want you to tell me what should be in this book."

Greg Laurie: Wow.

Dr. James Dobson: And Greg, it was amazing. They wept. They were in a very safe environment and they weren't angry at their dads, but they felt like they did not even see them. And they would tell stories about how they longed to be with their dads and what a girl needs from a dad. And I call it the three T's. They need time, they need touch. Put your arm around them, hug them. A girl needs to be hugged.

And talk. And there's a couple of others, but those are the primary ones. Just sit down and talk. These girls who would come to The Institute would say, "Do you know my dad didn't even ask me what we're going to do here? I would try to tell him that I was coming to this institute on the family and they weren't interested." Now, not all men are that way. Obviously, there's a lot of great fathers out there, so we have to be careful what we're saying here.

Greg Laurie: When you think about marriage, I mean this is the foundation of everything. And one thing I've always emphasized is your first priority is to Christ as a man or a woman. But then if you're married, it's to your spouse. And the best thing you can do for your children is to love their dad or love their mom. Keep that marriage strong. And here we're talking about the importance of a father, but maybe there's someone listening, Dr. Dobson, a dad who has walked away from a marriage-

Dr. James Dobson: How did you cope with your circumstances? You had seven dads, none of them were dads to you. How did you deal with that? How'd you come up to be a man's man?

Greg Laurie: Dr. Dobson, initially I put armor on. I had to learn how to cope. And so I became hard, I became cynical and I carried that cynicism and that hardness through life. I also developed a sense of humor. A lot of times when you see comedians interviewed, they'll talk about tortured childhoods. And I get it because you develop humor as a defense mechanism. You make light of everything even when it's not funny. But for me, what really changed me, of course, was when I became a Christian. And for the first time I understood what a family should look like, I understood what a man should look like.

I found some good godly male role models that were older than me. When I was a new believer as a young kid, I hung around mainly with older men, not people of my own age. Because I needed an example, I needed a model. And then when I got married, I wanted to be the best father I could be. And we've been married 42 years and I wanted to be the best husband I could be. So I think the simple answer is I accepted Christ into my life, I read the Bible, I believed the Bible, I applied the principles of the Bible, which work because they're God's Word.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, that saved you, didn't it? I mean, it really did.

Greg Laurie: It literally saved my life. I could be dead right now. Because a lot of people in my family, I mentioned to you in another interview we did, that my family, they were either notorious sinners or notorious Christians. A lot of alcoholism among my family. Who knows what path I would've taken.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you get into drugs?

Greg Laurie: Yeah, I got into drugs, I got into drinking. I got into drugs more than I got into drinking. But I mean, I was smoking pot every day, taking LSD on the weekends. It was my lifestyle. And I wouldn't say I was an addict, but I did it every day. But I came to a point even before I was a Christian, where I thought, this is a dead end street and I can't live this way anymore. But what do I do? Where do I go? What is life about? And that brought me to Christ. But wait, hey, I'm interviewing you. Don't start interviewing me.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, let me offer something here.

Greg Laurie: Okay. Sure. This is your show, you can do whatever you want.

Dr. James Dobson: No, it isn't my show. I'm in your office.

Greg Laurie: This is Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: We came from completely different environments. I had a wonderful father and mother. And my dad was a godly man, I never saw him compromise. He loved me, prayed for me. And the day before he had his last terrible heart attack, he was off someplace praying for me, praying for his own future and what the Lord wanted of him. And the Lord said, "You're going to reach millions of people around the world, but it is not going to be through you, it's going to be through your son." And then he had a heart attack and was gone. So I had that kind of influence and background and you had the opposite, yet here we are sitting here, serving the Lord to the best of our ability. That's a miracle.

Greg Laurie: It is. And I think no matter what your upbringing is, if there's a cycle of sin in your family, you can break that cycle. And you break it by committing your life to Christ and starting to do the right thing. I mean, there might be someone listening right now who has messed their family up, they've messed their marriage up, they've failed as a husband, as a father, as a wife, as a mother. Here's what we would say to you, repent and change your direction because look at the legacy of a father in Dr. Dobson's life. And then I wanted to be that father for my sons. I didn't have one, but I wanted to be that father for them.

Dr. James Dobson: Who was your role model?

Greg Laurie: Chuck Smith was a role model for me as he was a pastor. Billy Graham, who I actually got to know very well, was a clear role model for me. And then just other older godly men. They weren't famous people, they were just guys who loved God, loved their wives, loved their kids. And I would pick things up watching them, observing them. You've been a role model to me on the radio and then getting to know you as well. So I just looked for godly men that were living it and I followed their example. So Dr. Dobson, thank you for letting me hijack your studio today. It's been a privilege to interview you and thank you for all you do and our prayer is that you'll keep doing it.

Dr. James Dobson: Greg, I'm really proud of you. I'm proud of the way you've lived your life, proud of what the Lord is doing in your church and through your evangelistic efforts. And the end is not yet.

Greg Laurie: Amen. Thank you.

Roger Marsh: And with that, we conclude this classic special edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. This time it was pastor, author and evangelist Greg Laurie's turn to sit in the host's chair and interview Dr. Dobson about his life in ministry. If you enjoyed this Family Talk program and you want to share it with a friend or family member, remember you can do so easily just by visiting our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. Now, as Christians, we know that life is supposed to be wonderful all the time. Happy and having fun. Great riches, peaceful relationship, joy unending. It just doesn't get any better than this, right? Well, you and I both know the reality. Sometimes the circumstances in life just don't add up. Sometimes it seems like God just doesn't make any sense at all. And then our faith begins to wobble or in some cases comes crashing down altogether and it feels like we can no longer trust Him because He didn't meet our wants or our desires.

Well, in reality, living the Christian life can in fact be extremely difficult at times. We will experience trials and hardships and we may never fully understand the tragic circumstances that God allows this side of eternity. Friend, if you are going through a tough time right now, I know you will find comfort and encouragement in the When God Doesn't Make Sense 10 day email series from Dr. James Dobson and the JDFI. Every email you receive will help you explore the depths of hardship and examine its purpose. Our prayer for you is that after you spend a few minutes each day reading the wisdom from Dr. Dobson and God's Word, you'll be strengthened in your faith as you learn why dark valleys can bring life's greatest blessings, and that starts with a closer walk with the Lord.

Now, this is a free email series, all we need from you is your email address. But you need to do so by registering online at a special URL we've set up, drjamesdobson.org/when-god-doesnt-make-sense-series. That's drjamesdobson.org/when-god-doesnt-make-sense-series. And remember that there's no apostrophe there in doesn't. Well, I'm Roger Marsh and you've been listening to Family Talk today, the voice you trust for the family you love. Be sure to join us again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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