



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** When God Doesn't Appear to Make Sense to Us – Part 3

**Guest(s):** Dr. James Dobson

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**Dr. James Dobson:** You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

**Roger Marsh:** Welcome To Family Talk with your host, psychologist and bestselling author Dr. James Dobson. I'm Roger Marsh and Dr. Dobson today we once again look at a subject that every Christian encounters, but none of us really likes addressing all that much.

**Dr. James Dobson:** We've been talking for two days now about frankly one of my favorite books, it's entitled *When God Doesn't Make Sense*. I do hope that you heard those discussions because virtually every Christian will encounter those times when unanswered whys will flood into our Christian experience and give us a sense of urgency that may even threaten or undermine our relationship with Christ. When this happens some people think, "How could God allow this to happen to me? Does He really love me? Does He care that I'm hurting and that I'm suffering?" That's when many of us hit what R.T. Kendall calls the betrayal barrier. Those moments when you feel abandoned by God, that's a common experience in the Christian life and we want to prevent that because it is not valid. If that scenario has occurred to you, I do hope that you'll get and read a copy of *When God Doesn't Make Sense*. It's helped millions of people who've hit the wall theologically and many have abandoned their faith. I call that experience losing God and we must not allow Satan to do that to us, he makes sense even when he doesn't make sense.

The Scriptures tell us, "We see through a dark glass now but then face-to-face and we will know even as we are now knowing." Someday I think those whys will have answers, for now you have to trust Him and depend on Him and you can do that. You can trust Him even when you can't track Him, so that's how far we've gotten with our discussion in the last two days. For the balance of day three in this discussion, I began with an illustration right out of our own backyard.

When we lived in southern California, we had a vine that grew on the fence at the back of our property and this is the most ambitious vine in the history of the world. In fact, it wanted to conquer the entire state and it was just growing in all

directions and there was 150 year old oak tree, it was just beautiful. It shaded our backyard and the vine wanted to conquer the oak tree and if you would allow the vine to climb up the oak tree it would kill it.

So every three or four months I would look out the window and the vine had again attacked the oak tree and it was heading up there and it was winding around and on its way up the limbs. So I would go out there and I would not pull the vine off the tree, that would rip the bark and it would damage the tree. I would just take some shears and I'd walk up there and I would clip the bottom of the vine and walk away. Now the vine looks exactly the same, there's no change and yet it had been mortally wounded and you come back in about three days and those shiny green leaves were kind of dull. Come back a couple of days later and they were brown around the edge, come back a week later and there's these big black malignant spots all over the leaves. Another week or two, they were totally brown and they'd fall off leaving only a stick protruding up the tree and then finally that would fall away.

A person who goes through these kinds of crises and hits the betrayal barrier, and loses God is like that vine. Now, what does it mean to lose God? That doesn't mean He's gone, that doesn't mean you're not a Christian, it doesn't mean that He doesn't care. To lose God means your faith is so wounded and so damaged that you can't reach out and take hold of Him and you may not even be aware that He's there and many people go through this, they lose God. What happens to them when they do? What happens when you lose God? John 15:5-6 address this beautifully. Jesus is speaking and says, "I am the vine and you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him he will bear much fruit. Apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me and the vine is clipped, he is like a branch that is thrown away in withers and such branches are picked up and thrown into the fire and burned." You must not allow Satan to do that to your faith in the hard times.

Hold on, hang on that's what He wants of us. Let me read you a Scripture to this effect, this is from Romans 4:17-22. This is about Abraham, Abraham's the father of our faith. He's the one that we hold up as the example of faith under fire. Listen to what is written about him, "Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed." Do you get that? You look at the facts and the facts say it can't happen. There's not even a hope that Isaac would somehow survive this sacrifice and yet it says, "Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed." That seems like a contradiction, doesn't it? There's no hope but Abraham says, "There's hope." So became the father of many nations just as it had been said to him, so shall your offspring be. Without weakening in his faith he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead since he was about 100 years old and that Sarah's womb was also dead. You understand what he's saying there? He's saying he looked at the facts and the facts said no way.

He said he faced the fact that his body was too old to reproduce and that Sarah had gone through menopause or whatever he called it in those days and that she was not going to be having any babies. She's 90 years old and that must

have been a little bit funny to him when he even thought about her singing Rock-a-bye Baby. I mean it wasn't going to happen, so he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead yet he did not waiver through unbelief regarding the promise of God. But was strengthened his faith and gave glory to God being fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised. There it is folks. When God doesn't make sense and you can't figure it out, you look at the facts and they say no way. When everything contradicts what you've been told and what you believe. What's God want of you? He wants you to hold onto your faith. He wants you to believe anyway, He wants you to not be shaken off the limb, He wants you to keep you linked into the vine.

Don't let go even when it makes no sense, and that's all through Scripture and God is asking something of us that I think we need to convey to younger Christians who are not yet there. Go ahead.

Speaker 3: I went through a time in my life where I felt God betrayed me. Actually, it happened when I was young but I just didn't deal with it. I was raped when I was four and it was the same year I gave my heart to Jesus and later on as I was an adult and I had to start dealing with all this stuff that was inside and I couldn't understand why God didn't protect me.

Dr. James Dobson: Now this is an example of what I'm talking about, that sense of betrayal, that sense of having been abandoned by God at a very critical moment. If we're honest again that is very, very widespread in the human family and if you just take it on through our lives you'll bump into that too. You may never understand why. I don't know why the Lord took my father when he had such a great influence on me, that loss will never be compensated for. I didn't understand when I was playing basketball and had that heart attack, and God has opened all these doors. Why is He giving me all that opportunity and now I find myself in the cardiac care unit with tubes hanging all over me? There's some situations you can't explain, I see it now. I think the Lord used that dramatically in my life, it changed me. It changed me emotionally and spiritually, made me more sensitive to Him, more dependent upon Him, made me eat better. I've eaten some of the finest bird seed man can buy since.

Well with that reference to bird seed, I ended my presentations on the subject when God doesn't make sense. I do as I said at the top of the program, hope that you had an opportunity to hear the entire series because at some point in time it will be relevant to you. I think I can say that without fear of contradiction. Now to use the balance of our time here on our program, I want you to hear something recorded at a different time but it is still on point. It's on target with what we've been talking about and I think you will find it relevant.

My first encounter with death occurred when I was barely three years of age. I'd become friends with a two-year-old whose parents were members of the church my father pastored. His name was Danny and he came to visit me one day, we dressed up like cowboys and we walked around shooting at things with toy guns. I remember trying to teach the little fellow how the game was played.

A few days later Danny contracted an infection of some type and he died very quickly.

I didn't understand what had happened to, although I knew my parents were very upset. They took me with them to the funeral home but they left me in the car for what seemed like an hour or more. Finally, my father came to get me, I was taken inside and shown the casket of my little friend. Dad then held me up so I could see Danny's body. I remember believing that he was asleep and that I could have awakened him if they would've let me open his eyes. After we got back in the car my parents tried to explain what had happened to Danny. That was my first awareness that bad things can happen to good people. A short time later the same thing happened to my grandmother and I began to get the picture, that gradual awareness of death is rather typical for preschool kids. Their dogs and cats die and then they lose a grandparent or another member of the family. Some children, especially those in the inner city learn about dying from the violence that they witness in the streets.

Regardless of how it comes to be understood, death has a profound impact on our outlook and our behavior from that point forward. For most of us it represents the ultimate tragedy, the end to everything familiar and predictable. It bears the aura of the unknown as depicted in horror movies and scenes from beyond the grave. It's usually associated with disease and accidents and violence, all having very threatening overtones for us. Given this lifelong orientation, a diagnosis of a terminal illness or the loss of a loved one bears awesome implications for us psychologically and spiritually. I'm sure it will always be that way and these words will not change it, but we do need to understand that God views death very differently than we do. It's no disaster to him. Isaiah 57:1 states, "The righteous perish and no one ponders it in his heart." In other words no one understands. "The devout men are taken away and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil." In other words the righteous are far better off in the next world than in this one.

Psalms 116:15 puts it more succinctly, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Now, what do these Scriptures mean for the living? Well, they hinted a place on the far side of the river that is more wonderful than we can imagine. That is in fact precisely what we read in 1 Corinthians 2:9. It says, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him." How reassuring it is to know that our loved ones have gone on to that better world and that we as believers will soon join them. Does this sound like pie in the sky by and by or perhaps the opiate of the people as Karl Marx sarcastically described it? Sure it does. But the Bible teaches it and I believe it and because I do death has taken on an entirely new dimension for me. In a recent telephone conversation with the Reverend Billy Graham, whom I admire tremendously for his consistent walk with the Lord. I mentioned his ongoing battle with Parkinson's disease.

Having watched that illness ravage the mind and body of my mother, I asked him, "Dr. Graham does your faith hold you steady at this stage of your life? Do you still believe what you did when you were young?" The godly evangelist immediately replied with great emotion, "Oh Jim, I can hardly wait to see my Lord." See that is the biblical response to death. I heard a man who understood this concept beautifully. His last words before dying were, "This should be interesting." Paul put it like this. He said, "Oh death, where is thy sting? Oh, grave where is thy victory?" 1 Corinthians 15:55. Then toward the end of life he said, "For me to live as Christ and to die is gain." Philippians 1:21. If you have recently lost a child or a loved one or are facing death yourself, I don't want to minimize your pain. But I hope you will see that the discomfort is intensified by the misunderstanding of time. Our journey here has the illusion of permanence about it, billions who went before us thought the same thing.

Now they're gone, every one of them. In truth, we're just passing through. If we fully comprehended this brevity of life, the things that frustrate us. Including most of those occasions when God doesn't make sense wouldn't matter so much. Now this is the vitally important biblical concept I want you to understand. David wrote, "As for man his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field. But the wind passes over it and it is gone and the place remembers it no more." He also said, "Show me oh Lord my life's end and the number of my days, let me know how fleeting is my life." Moses expressed the same idea in Psalm 90:12. He said, "Teach us to number our days of right that we may gain a heart of wisdom." See that wisdom of which Moses spoke puts everything into proper perspective. It's difficult to get excited over raw materialism for example, when one remembers that everything in this life is temporary.

That thought occurred to me one day when I was taking a commercial airline flight, we had taxied out to the end of the runway and we waited for clearance to take off. I looked out of the window and I saw the remains of two huge 747 airplanes sitting on the field. All the paint had been stripped off the fuselage and rust was spreading down from the top, the insides had been gutted and the windows were sealed. Then I saw a tiny bit of blue paint on the tail of one plane and I realized that these had been proud ships in the fleet of Pan-American Airways. The empty hulks looked pitiful sitting out there alone shorn of their beauty. For some reason, they reminded me of the poem entitled Little Boy Blue written by Eugene Field. The first stanza reads, "The little toy dog is covered with dust but sturdy and staunch he stands, and the little toy soldier is red with rust and his musket molds in his hands.

Time was when the little toy dog was new and the soldier was passing fair and that was the time our little boy blue kissed them and put them there." I might have composed my own poem as I sat looking out the window. Time was when these two airplanes were new and they flew to great heights in the sky but now they are rusty forgotten and old and they seem to be questioning why? I imagined the day these magnificent craft were rolled out of the Boeing plant with shiny new enamel and the proud PanAm insignia on the tails. They were

christened with champagne amidst cheers and laughter, then they were taken on their maiden voyages. Little boys and little girls craned their neck skyward to watch these beautiful birds coming in for a landing, what excitement they must have generated for passengers and crew. Now the company that owned them has gone bankrupt and the planes are grounded forever. How could it have happened in fewer than 20 years? Who would've thought that these multimillion dollar aircraft would come to such a quick and ignoble end?

As we taxied past the shells I thought about the impermanence of everything that now looks so stable. Nothing lasts very long and we're the ones who are passing through on our way to another life of far greater significance. To those who are hurting and discouraged at this time, I think it would be comforting to look forward to the time when the present trials will be a distant memory. A day of celebration is coming like nothing that has ever occurred in the history of mankind. The guest of honor on that morning will be one wearing a seamless robe with eyes like flames of fire and feet like fine brass. As we bow humbly before Him, a great voice will thunder from the Heaven saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men and He will live with them and they will be His people and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Again the mighty voice will echo through the corridors of time. "Never again will they hunger, never again will they thirst, the sun will not beat upon them nor any scorching heat. For the lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd and He will lead them to springs of living water and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Revelation 7:16-17. "This is the hope of the ages that burns within my breast. It is the ultimate answer to those who suffer and struggle today. It is the only solace for those who have said goodbye to a loved one. Though the pain is indescribable now and I have felt it in my time, we must never forget that our separation is temporary. We will be reunited forever on that glad resurrection morning and as the scripture promises our tears will be banished forever. My father and mother will also be in the crowd standing expectantly beside my little grandmother who prayed for me before I was born.

They will be straining to catch a glimpse of our arrival just like they did so many Christmas seasons when we flew into the Kansas City Airport. Dad will have so much to tell me that he'll be just bursting with excitement, he'll want to take me to some distant planet he's discovered. Your loved ones who died in Christ will also be in that great throng singing and shouting the praises of the redeemer. What a celebration it will be. This is the reward for the faithful, for those who break through the betrayal barrier and persevere to the end. This is the crown of righteousness prepared for those who have fought a good fight and finished the course and kept the faith. Throughout our remaining days in this life therefore, let me urge you not to be discouraged by temporal cares except the circumstances as they're presented to you. Expect periods of hardship to occur and don't be dismayed when they come, lean into the pain when your time to suffer comes around.

Knowing that God will use the difficulty for his purposes and indeed for our own good. The Lord is very near and He's promised that your temptation will not be greater than you can bear. I'll leave you with these wonderful words from Psalm 34:17-19. "The righteous cry out and the Lord hears them, He delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and He saves those who are crushed in spirit. A righteous man may have many troubles but the Lord delivers him from them all."

Roger Marsh:

Amen. Friend, don't be discouraged indeed. As Paul writes in Philippians 4:6-7. "Do not be anxious about anything but in every situation by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God and the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." I love those words. As a matter of fact when I was 12 years old that was the first Bible verse I ever remember memorizing 'cause I wanted to not because some Sunday school teacher told me. That powerful verse was also the conclusion of Dr. James Dobson's three-part discussion on the topic when God doesn't make sense here on Family Talk. Now this three-part series was recorded several years ago when doctor discussed this topic with his former staff while he was president of Focus on the Family. You can find Dr. Dobson's book of that same title at our website, [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). This helpful resource is available to you, we'll be happy to send it to you as our way of thanking you for a suggested donation of only \$20.

This is a great resource to help you, a friend or family member work through a difficult time. Again, [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) is where you can order online. Also, you can reach a member of our trained customer care team Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM Mountain Time when you call 877-732-6825. They're there to help process your request for Dr. Dobson's book *When God Doesn't Make Sense*. They also have additional resources they can recommend and they'll be happy to pray with and for you if that's what you need. Again, the number to call 877-732-6825. The Dr. James Dobson Family Institute is a listener supported ministry and right now I am happy to announce that because of your prayers and faithful support we will soon be introducing a new initiative for you on how you can get involved and come alongside us to support expectant parents, young families and new mothers in need. Now, there's still much work to be done to protect the pre-born and we are excited to share this opportunity with you.

With your support to the JDFI, we guarantee to provide the resources and the undergirding our pro-life pregnancy resource centers need just to stay open. Now, to adopt a PRC as they're commonly known, stay tuned to Family Talk in the coming days, exciting news to follow. I'm Roger Marsh and from all of us here at the JDFI thank you for making us a part of your day. You've been listening to Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

Announcer:

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