



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Dr. Dobson: The Untold Stories – Part 1

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

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**Dr. James Dobson:** Hello, everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, a radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and thank you for joining us for this program.

**Roger Marsh:** Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and we have been listening to Dr. Dobson interview interesting and important guests for decades here on the radio, but today, you're in for a real treat. We're going to turn the tables on doctor. In a classic program that airs today and tomorrow, you're going to hear me step in as the guest co-host and interview Dr. Dobson. Now, as you can imagine, Doctor has had a pretty interesting life with many stories to share, and right now, we're going to hear some of his favorites, especially from when he was newly married to his wife, Shirley. I don't want you to miss one minute of these captivating stories, so let's jump in right now to my discussion with Dr. James Dobson, right here on Family Talk.

Well, hello everyone. I'm Roger Marsh and you are listening to Family Talk. Now, this is a very special broadcast today. I've been asked to serve as co-host for this program, along with Dr. Dobson who's here in studio, of course. Many of you have been listening to Dr. Dobson, probably for most of the last 39 years as he's been broadcasting, or there's a good chance that you've read at least one of his books, or if someone has given you one of his books. And yet, having heard him and having read his books, you still don't really feel like you know him. Basically, you hear him interviewing people, and of course, he talks to people all the time. He interviews them. I thought today, we would try something different. Why don't we turn the tables a little bit and I will be asking Dr. Dobson the questions too?

**Dr. James Dobson:** Are you sure you want to do this?

**Roger Marsh:** Well, you've invited me here. I'm wandering into this territory very, very carefully, Dr. Dobson. I'm grateful to be here, but I know that there are listeners who are wondering all sorts of questions about your childhood, about your courtship with Shirley. All sorts of different things. So if I may, Dr. Dobson, are you game? Do you want to go for this?

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, I think it's a good idea. We'll see if people really want to know these things. You have your own radio program, don't you?

Roger Marsh: I do. It's called-

Dr. James Dobson: Tell us about you before we talk about me.

Roger Marsh: Well, thank you for asking. See, he's doing it again. I'm supposed to be asking questions about you and you're asking me about me, but I will answer. The program I host is called The Bottom Line. It's heard on 25 different markets up and down the West Coast, and we talk about a lot of biblical worldview issues. As a matter of fact, I was on the Family Talk website and you had just done a commentary about a school principal who had canceled Valentine's Day, it was too exclusionary. And we had that same conversation from a biblical worldview just the other day on our program too. People are asking questions about those types of things, and how do we as Christians engage the culture without just condoning everything the culture does? And so that's the gist of the program. It's heard on KBRT in Southern California, which I know is a station that you're very, very well familiar with.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I met you before and I enjoy interacting with you. We went to lunch together and the conversation never lagged, so it's going to be fun working back and forth. Thank you for being here.

Roger Marsh: Thank you for having me here. Okay, let's get the ball rolling here with the most important question that everybody wants to know. Let's put the books aside. Let's put the video series aside. Let's put the radio show aside. Let's talk about your beloved Shirley. Now, you two have a fascinating story about how you met, because in this day and age, we think, well, people can meet from different states or different regions because of social media, but when you two met, it was a different story. Talk about that.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, we met in college, but the interesting thing is how unlikely it was that we would ever know each other, because I grew up in East Texas and my father was a pastor of a Church of the Nazarene church. I found the Lord there when I was four years of age and I grew up in the faith and knowing who the Lord was, and I think had a pretty good grasp of how He felt about me, that He loved me. I had wonderful parents. And Shirley grew up in Torrance, California, in a Nazarene church. Her father was an alcoholic and they had a lot of trouble in their family, a lot of difficulty, and it wound up being a divorce. And when Shirley was about six years of age, on a Sunday morning, she stepped out in the aisle and walked down and knelt at an altar and she found the Lord. Now, here I am 1500 miles away. How is the Lord going to bring this couple together?

Roger Marsh: Sure.

Dr. James Dobson: They seem ideally suited for each other. Well, it happened because we both went to Pasadena College, which was a school, college, a wonderful school in Pasadena, California. And I was ahead of her, so I was a senior in college, a big man on campus, and Shirley was a sophomore, and we were sitting in the cafeteria. And you know those situations where you looked over to your left and you see a pretty girl, and then you look away and then you look back to see if she's looking at you, and then you look back at her and it goes back and forth. That happened for about 20 minutes. We were catching each other's eye. We did not speak on that day, but a little bit later, several days later, we had finished the evening meal in that cafeteria and we were out on the campus, a beautiful green campus, and Shirley was standing with a bunch of other students. And I walked up to her and I had wanted to get acquainted with her after having seen her. She was such a pretty little girl.

Roger Marsh: And especially after 20 minutes of playing eye contact with each other. I think there was some interest.

Dr. James Dobson: It was the right time. And so I walked up to her, and this is really clever. I mean, this is clever.

Roger Marsh: Okay, I'm taking notes now.

Dr. James Dobson: I took a nickel out of my pocket and I said, "I want to bet you a hamburger that I can flip this nickel and I can call it heads or tails." She said, "You got it." So I flipped the nickel into the air and it came down, and I called it heads and it was heads. So now, she owes me a hamburger. Now, you see how clever this was?

Roger Marsh: So romantic.

Dr. James Dobson: If I lose, then I get a date with her to buy her a hamburger. If I win, she buys me one. I win both ways.

Roger Marsh: I'm taking notes here.

Dr. James Dobson: And I won, and if you know Shirley, it's typical of her to say, "Oh, no. We're going to go double or nothing." So I said, "Okay, we'll flip it again." I flipped it and I won again. And she said, "Double or nothing." I flipped it again and now I have four hamburgers, and she says, "We're going to keep flipping." She was going to flip until she got what she expected.

Roger Marsh: It wasn't a two-headed coin, was it?

Dr. James Dobson: It wasn't, but she thought it was.

Roger Marsh: I'm sure.

Dr. James Dobson: So we flipped that thing, and I promise you, I won 16 times.

Roger Marsh: Not that anyone's counting.

Dr. James Dobson: I'm not kidding. It was 32 hamburgers that she owed me and she's been frying them ever since, so that was our first real conversation.

Roger Marsh: Oh, my. Then how did the courtship develop from there? I mean, obviously, you started off on the food note.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Well, you can't go very far on that. I played a lot of tennis in those days and I was often on the tennis court in tennis shorts, and in those days, shorts were short.

Roger Marsh: Actual shorts.

Dr. James Dobson: Yes. And so there was a couple of courts right in the center of the campus, and so I was down there getting ready to play tennis and Shirley came walking by with another guy. And she walked up to me, and I promise, she didn't say hello or anything. She just said, "Hi, legs." And she shocked me, a little flirt, and she had seen me in these shorts. And I figured later, I thought about that, anybody who likes my legs can't be all bad.

Roger Marsh: Very true.

Dr. James Dobson: So that was the beginning of the relationship and it wasn't very long before I called and asked her for a date, and Roger, we had an absolutely storybook romance in college.

Roger Marsh: That's wonderful to hear.

Dr. James Dobson: We laughed, we had so much fun together. It was a natural connection. I just fell in love with her, and we are about to celebrate our 56th wedding anniversary.

Roger Marsh: Congratulations

Dr. James Dobson: In August.

Roger Marsh: What a wonderful testimony.

Dr. James Dobson: So I teasingly say, I think it's going to work.

Roger Marsh: Now, did you come up with something creative to ask her for her hand in marriage?

Dr. James Dobson: You know what? They didn't do that much then. Now, they plan all kinds of special things.

Roger Marsh: It's a television show, yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. We just started talking about it and it seemed like the right thing to do. And so we were married in August, 27th, 1960, and good things have happened.

Roger Marsh: Congratulations on 56 years. What a wonderful legacy. If you're just tuning in, you're listening to a conversation with Dr. James Dobson here on Family Talk. My name is Roger Marsh, and I am actually sitting in the host's chair today. Dr. Dobson, for all the times that you have been interviewing so many people, it's nice to be able to put you on the hot seat a little bit and give our listeners a chance to get to know you a little bit better, and you and Shirley. Now, people have looked to you for marriage advice for years of course, and they've read your books and they've benefited from it. We've heard about the courtship. How were those first few years of marriage for Jim and Shirley?

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, they were wonderful. Again, I don't want to sound like Pollyanna or something, but we just had so much fun right from the beginning. I did make some bad mistakes however.

Roger Marsh: Rookie mistakes as a new husband?

Dr. James Dobson: Rookie, absolute rookie mistakes. One of them is that I didn't fully understand that Shirley is a profoundly romantic human being. Many guys just don't get that we're made differently, and we were married in August and Valentine's Day came along very quickly, and I didn't even think Valentine's Day was anything important.

Roger Marsh: Oh, my. I can hear all the men just breathing hard.

Dr. James Dobson: I wasn't thinking about it at all, and in fact, I was at USC graduate school at that time. And so on that day, I went over to the library on the campus of USC and I was in the stacks. Have you ever gone into the stacks? It's where you get lost in there, those musty, smelly books back there, and I was working on a thesis and I lost all track of time. About seven o'clock at night, I went over to the little cafeteria on campus and I ate, came back, worked some more, and by this time, it was about 9:30.

Roger Marsh: On Valentine's Day?

Dr. James Dobson: On Valentine's Day.

Roger Marsh: Your first Valentine's Day?

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. I didn't call. I didn't think it was any big deal.

Roger Marsh: Oh, no.

Dr. James Dobson: And so I went out and got in my little Volkswagen and I drove toward home, but on the way to our little condo, I passed my parents' house.

Roger Marsh: Oh, no. I already know where this is going? No.

Dr. James Dobson: I went in to see my parents and my mother had baked an apple pie. I dearly love apple pie and so we sat and talked a while. Now, it's about 10:30 at night.

Roger Marsh: On your Valentine's Day.

Dr. James Dobson: Valentine's. First Valentine's Day. I get in the car and I drive over to Arcadia, California, where we lived in this little two room apartment. I put the key in the lock and I open the door and it's all dark, and through the darkness, I see a big sign that Shirley had made that said, "Happy Valentine's Day."

Roger Marsh: Oh, my.

Dr. James Dobson: And I said, "Oh, no." Then I looked over on the table and there was a coagulated meal and there were candles there that had melted and bent over, and what was left of a dinner that she had made for that occasion was sitting there, not eaten, and she was nowhere to be found.

Roger Marsh: I was going to say, what did you do?

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I panicked. I mean, it never occurred to me that that was a special day, and I opened the bedroom door and I looked in there and Shirley was in bed and the covers were right about at her ear level. You ever had that happen?

Roger Marsh: I have. I have, and all the men are nodding saying, "I know that look, I know that look."

Dr. James Dobson: And she didn't say a word. I said, "Shirley, I'm sorry. I forgot." And Shirley is a forgiving lady and she did forgive me, but I learned a lesson that day, that romantic things matter to her and she sees that very differently than I did, and I needed to get with the program. But I want to tell you something. I didn't learn the lesson well enough, and about three or four years later, we were able to buy a little house. It was very small. It had obviously no furniture in it.

Roger Marsh: A little starter home.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, a little starter house. We put \$4,000 down. We sweated blood to get \$4,000.

Roger Marsh: That was a big amount back then.

Dr. James Dobson: Right. And we paid \$31,900 for the house. Believe it or not, that was possible in those days, and Shirley's birthday came along. And we didn't have any furniture.

We had a table that we had bought which we ate on and a couple of chairs, and that was about it.

Roger Marsh: Sure.

Dr. James Dobson: Furthermore, in the backyard, there was nothing. There was not any lawn furniture or anything, so I thought, here we are. We bought this house. What a romantic thing. A young couple buys their first house. And I thought it would really be fun to buy something for the backyard, so I went down to a store where you buy that kind of stuff and I bought a redwood table.

Roger Marsh: Like a picnic table?

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, a picnic table with crisscross legs, and with little help, was able to put it upside down on my Volkswagen.

Roger Marsh: On your bug.

Dr. James Dobson: And I tied it on there.

Roger Marsh: That would've been fun to see.

Dr. James Dobson: I looked like I was in a flying saucer going down the freeway with this thing, and I couldn't wait to share it with Shirley. And I drove down our little street and then into the driveway, and I opened the back door, and I said, "Shirley. She says, "Yes?" I said, "Come out and see something." I had bought her a birthday gift. She came out and she took one look at that Volkswagen and that redwood table, and she broke into tears.

Roger Marsh: Oh, no. And they were not tears of joy.

Dr. James Dobson: They were not. Oh, it was not great excitement. She goes back in the house, didn't say a word, and I stood there in the driveway saying, "Now, what did I do wrong here?"

Roger Marsh: I remembered your birthday.

Dr. James Dobson: Listen. Doesn't that make sense to a guy, that we could have breakfast out there in the backyard on that redwood table and we could have friends over, and it would start the collection of lawn furniture? It made all kinds of sense to me, but it wounded Shirley because there was no romantic element to it, and I began to get the picture. And before long, I realized, Shirley needs things that are frilly, she wants things that smell good, and she wants things that express love to her from my heart, and a redwood table didn't get it done.

Roger Marsh: Well, even if you put doilies on it or something? Maybe some flowers.

Dr. James Dobson: Believe me, it wasn't even in the neighborhood. I was telling that story when I was speaking one time, and this woman came up to me afterwards and she said, "You think your wife had it bad? My husband gave me a wheelbarrow for my birthday." So there is a lesson there for guys. Women care about romantic things. It's what you write on the card and it's how you approach your wife, that she has some needs you don't know about and you need to figure them out.

Roger Marsh: See, I knew there was that kind of story behind a lot of your parenting advice, a lot of your marriage advice. That these are tried and true. Learning from the school of hard knocks in addition to your advanced education too, Dr. Dobson, because it is so encouraging for me as a guy to know, James Dobson had a Valentine's blowup and a birthday disaster and that type of thing too. It just, it really-

Dr. James Dobson: Hey, Roger, who would've told me that? Where should I have learned that? I should have observed it? We went together for three years before we were married. I should have gotten that figured out, but many guys don't. I'm not alone in this.

Roger Marsh: Yeah. Well, you were 25 years before Gary Chapman writing *The Five Love Languages*. I mean, big help he was.

Dr. James Dobson: I hadn't read his book.

Roger Marsh: Right. Because he probably was watching guys like us too, saying, "Picnic table on top of the car. I'm putting that in the book."

Dr. James Dobson: But Shirley and I began to understand each other. There were things that she needed to understand about me as well.

Roger Marsh: Does she have a story? Not to put you on the spot on her behalf, but does she have a similar experience?

Dr. James Dobson: I'll let her tell it to you.

Roger Marsh: Okay, fair enough. Fair enough. Then see that you have learned. You've learned very, very well. On this special edition of Family Talk with Dr. James Dobson, I'm Roger Marsh, and we're talking with Dr. Dobson just about his legacy and giving you an opportunity to hear from him some of the stories that have shaped who he is, his family stories, and I know too your relationship with your children is really, really precious to you and special to you. What was it like for you and Shirley when you found out you were going to be parents? How did that change your family?

Dr. James Dobson: It was a wonderful experience. I don't think there's been anything in my life that has given me a greater reward or a sense of fulfillment than bringing those little children into the world, and bringing them up to serve the Lord and their fellow



men and trying to teach values and character to them. You and I were talking before about my field being child development, and so what I was learning in graduate school about children, about boys and girls and about the developmental process, I was seeing with my own children. And I remember when Ryan was about three years of age just watching him grow. The same for his sister, seeing them develop and how quickly it occurred. There is a mantle of humanness that descends. Of course, they are human even long before birth because they're created in the image of God, but you're seeing the character, you're seeing the personality develop, and you're seeing them grow and learn and love, and that is a wonderful process to observe.

I mentioned that I would go away to speak and I'd be gone for even three days, and when I would come back, for a period not more than one or two seconds, I could see that my kids had changed since I was gone.

Roger Marsh: Just in that first moment you walked through the door.

Dr. James Dobson: But I couldn't keep it. Three or four minutes later, I couldn't quite remember what it was, but something was happening. Those kids were growing and learning, and the whole thing was a laboratory for me.

Roger Marsh: I could tell in your countenance how you change when you talked about Ryan being three and seeing those incremental changes, or Danae being in her younger years too. And what struck me just in this moment is the fact that I'm thinking, "Okay, this is Dr. James Dobson, Reagan White House, [inaudible 00:21:35], television shows, Pete Maravich." I had this really just quick blast of all the famous luminaries that you are in friendship with and have been with over the years, and yet what lights you up is watching your children grow and become the man and woman that they've become.

Dr. James Dobson: There's no question about it, especially the responsibility that you have to introduce them to Christ, and watching the spiritual aspect of that relationship. There's nothing more important than that, and it's a tough job too because you make a lot of mistakes along the way. I don't care who you are and I don't care how many books you've written. You still are learning as you go along and you make some mistakes there too.

Roger Marsh: Well, you've got more than 30 books to your credit, and for you to make that kind of admission I think gives us all a bit of pause, gives us a little bit of comfort, in knowing that it's something that we get on the job training for, because like you said, where were these people when we were younger to teach us and say, "Hey, when your daughter hits seven, she's going to need this from her dad"?

Dr. James Dobson: You know, Roger, I fear that sometimes, those of us who advise parents and who write books for parents make the other mistake, giving the implication that all of you folks out there don't get it but we do. The truth of the matter is none

of us is perfect, not one of us, and we do need to pay attention to the process of being a good husband or father and letting other people know that we're in this thing together.

Roger Marsh: Well, Dr. Dobson, it has been a pleasure. Thank you for the invitation to come here and turn the tables on you, so to speak. You've been a great guest. You're an excellent host but you're an excellent guest too. Thank you for what you've shared with our Family Talk listeners today here on the program.

Dr. James Dobson: Thank you, Roger. I really enjoyed working with you.

Roger Marsh: Well, I certainly hope you enjoyed the stories that you heard today from our own Dr. James Dobson here on the special edition of Family Talk, and believe me, we have yet to even scratch the surface. Be sure to join us again tomorrow to hear more about the many twists and turns in Dr. Dobson's life that have led him to become the man he is today. You will not want to miss out.

Now, of course, Dr. Dobson has built his legacy serving the Lord and fighting to protect the sanctity of the family. He has dedicated his life's work to that mission, so if you are interested in a helpful resource for your family or marriage, we have just the book recommendation for you. It's entitled *The Complete Marriage and Family Home Reference Guide*, and it's written by our own Dr. James Dobson. This book is a go-to guide for families at every stage in life, from toddlers to teenagers, and also provides resources on how to make your marriage last through all the ups and downs of those seasons as well.

In this comprehensive, easy to access resource, you'll find time-tested and biblically based information covering a wide range of issues any family may face, like discipline, money, building a strong spiritual foundation, sibling rivalry, and more. So regardless of where your family is at in life right now, this book will bring you a wealth of knowledge at your fingertips for practically any situation that may come your way. Now, we'll be happy to send you a copy as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in support of the JDFI today. So to get your copy sent right to your door, simply click on the link at the bottom of the page when you visit our website, [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). Or if you prefer, you can select the resources tab at the top of the page and then click on store. From there, simply search *The Complete Marriage and Family Home Reference Guide* and place your order.

Thanks for remembering that we are a listener supported broadcast outreach. We greatly appreciate your prayers, but also your continued financial support as well. I'm Roger Marsh, and I hope you join us again tomorrow for part two of this classic conversation with Dr. James Dobson, the untold stories, right here on Family Talk. Till then, have a blessed day.

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