



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Reignite: How to Bring Joy Back into Your Life for Enduring Faith

Guest(s): Dr. Jack Graham

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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: Hello, and welcome back to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and I'd like to remind you that thanks to some special friends of our ministry we have a matching grant in place right now at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. This means that any financial gift that you give to the JDFI during the month of December will be doubled. To make a tax deductible donation over the phone call us at (877) 732-6825. That's (877) 732-6825. Or you can make a donation online when you go to drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. As you're preparing for your year end financial planning, remember that a gift to Family Talk is the perfect way to ensure that biblical values are defended on the airwaves and in the public square.

Today on Family Talk, we have another installment of our "Best Of 2021" collection today's program features pastor Jack Graham of Prestonwood Baptist church in Plano, Texas. Dr. Tim Clinton sat down with Dr. Graham at the 2021 National Religious Broadcasters Convention to discuss his book called *Reignite: Fresh Focus for Enduring Faith*. Let's listen to their conversation right now.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Dr. Graham, thank you for stopping by Family Talk. It's such a delight to have you.

Dr. Jack Graham: Thanks for having me.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jack, quite a storied life as a pastor, the great Prestonwood Church. Been there, it's absolutely stunning. One of the nation's largest and most dynamic congregations. I think you've got nearly 50,000 members, radio ministry, prolific author. You served as the honorary chairman for the National Day of Prayer, president of the Southern Baptist Convention for a while. Jack, just amazing. Tell us a little bit about your thoughts on ministry and what God has been doing and is doing.

Dr. Jack Graham: Yep. I always say there's never been a better time, and for us here in this country, a better place, to preach the gospel than right now. People are finding

themselves empty and restless and often hopeless. And we come with this message of life and truth and the Word of God, and grace and truth as Jesus teaches us to live out this gospel and to proclaim this gospel, so I've never been more encouraged, even though we're coming out of a very rough season, obviously, in the world, in the country. And yet I've never been more encouraged. We're seeing things in terms of sparks of revival in our church that we haven't seen in a while. We're at a better place right now with our church than we've been maybe in the last two or three years or more.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's so encouraging.

Dr. Jack Graham: For example, in the last eight days, we've baptized over 300 people, just brand new believers. Many of these are students and young people. It was spontaneous to some degree, camp, student camp. But the fact is God's people and the core of God's people are coming back. They're coming back strong. They're excited. They're more engaged than I've seen the church in a long time. I truly am encouraged, that's not hype, and it is truly the hope that we have.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jack, you're such a great preacher. Dr. Dobson, and I have talked many times about you and your voice. You challenge people to pursue the Word of God, to be relentless. What I love is, you're authentic, too. Your new work, *Reignite: A Fresh Focus for an Enduring Faith*, though, takes a little bit of a turn. You're willing to step into a very vulnerable position and share about a season of darkness. And it reminds me, Jack, just simply of this, storms, challenges, times of darkness come to all of us.

And often we're not ready for them, and they throw us. I can't help but think of the pandemic, the lockdowns, the racial trauma, the election mess, the race for the vaccine, everything. Thank God we're coming out of the other side of that. But Jack, it's devastated a lot of people. Mental health issues are soaring. We had a crisis, now we have a mental health disaster on our hands. And people are reeling, and they need a word of hope and encouragement. Job 5:7, Job 14:1, "Man who is born of woman is but a few days and their lives are often full of trouble." Your thoughts, Jack, about those times of darkness, those moments that spin us.

Dr. Jack Graham: We need a theology of suffering that comes from the Bible. Christianity is not immunity from struggles, from suffering, from pain. As you have said very eloquently, the struggle is real. And is real for all of us. I didn't really intend in this book, *Reignite*, to talk this much about my own personal struggle, 12 years ago, with anxiety and depression. But this will forever be, to me, my COVID book, as I was seeing this medical pandemic going on, and then this mental health pandemic increasing, it just exposed the underneath, the struggles that people were experiencing already, many who know God and know Christ, and some, many of course, who do not know Christ.

But I really wanted to write a book about endurance and that's the subtitle, *Enduring Faith*. The Scripture says that you must have endurance, and there's

perseverance and resilience. And that's what I wanted this book to be about. At some level, I wanted it to be my story now as a veteran believer. I've hit my three score and 10. I'm excited about life, I'm healthy, still pastoring, still going strong. But it does give you pause when you hit that number. But so now here in my 70th year, starting my eighth decade of life, I wanted to tell my story at some level about the faithfulness of God and the essentials of Christian living and how to keep going, how can you keep trekking with the Lord for many years. We've seen a lot of blowouts, including pastors along the way and drop outs and all the rest, burnouts. And I wanted to talk about those basics, those essentials for, whether you're veteran long-term believer or a new Christian, that it would encourage you to endure. But in the midst of that, I felt impressed to tell my story that in 2009, I had a cancer surgery, prostate cancer, and-

Dr. Tim Clinton: You got that call.

Dr. Jack Graham: I got that call and I was ready for that. I was okay with that. I didn't love the idea that I was having surgery. But I went in confident and believing that I would be just fine. But when I came out, I was back in the pulpit 11 days after this major surgery, which was not smart.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Really?

Dr. Jack Graham: Don't do that. I want to go back and just say, if you're a man over 40, you need to get your PSA checked, because prostate cancer is one of the most curable of cancers. And it's very important that men, and especially if you have a family history, but especially anyway if you're over 40.

But when I got out, the next thing I know I wasn't sleeping and anxiety began to creep in. Later I kind of identified it as a PTSD. I'd never had surgery. I never had a cold. I kill germs. I've got this great immune system. So now I've got cancer and they're saying, "Well, maybe we got it all. Maybe we didn't." And the next thing I know I'm in darkness.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You were talking in the book about how the anxiety kept building and even to a point where you were sensing or thinking you were having panic attacks.

Dr. Jack Graham: To this day. I don't know how to describe it. Again, I went to a counselor, which I encourage people to do. I got therapy ultimately. But I do think they described it as kind of a ... Well, to put it in a succinct turn, my guy said to me, he said, "You've been hit by a Mack truck and you've been left in the ditch." And that was pretty good description for me. I just couldn't get going. I mean, depression, anxiety, there are a lot of symptoms with it, including physical symptoms. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't concentrate, just all those things that I'd never experienced in my life, and that was part of it. I think if it ever happened again, I believe if it ever happened again, I would be better prepared to deal with it. But it was a really tough thing for me and for our family and-

Dr. Tim Clinton: And there's something about all of us, we try to think, "Hey, we're tough."

Dr. Jack Graham: Yeah, I wanted to man up.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah, "We're going to get through it." And even more than that, we're going to white-knuckle it. It's not going to faze me. But you know what often comes with anxiety is depression.

Dr. Jack Graham: Mm-hmm, yeah. The Bible says anxiety produces depression.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You bet.

Dr. Jack Graham: So, I mean, it's almost, you, as a counselor, a professional knows this, it's like, God made us so that if you're revving your system, rev, rev, rev, rev, you're running your system so hard, God baked it into us that your system will slow you down. It'll stop you from just spinning out of control.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yes, it will.

Dr. Jack Graham: And that's depression. So I didn't like that feeling either.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Right. And then what happens is, when you get into that kind of funk, if you will, you tend to disengage. I like to think of depression-

Dr. Jack Graham: Yeah, isolate.

Dr. Tim Clinton: ... the theory of depression is a theory of disengagement. You pull back to get control.

Dr. Jack Graham: Which is the last thing you need to do.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. When you pull back to get control, you're cutting off all the things that basically give you life, which only makes it even more compounded and more difficult.

Dr. Jack Graham: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jack, in the book, and I thought this was really brilliant, I liked how you talked about the sources of stress. Stop for a moment and look around you at what's happening. You wrote these words, "Change can bring it. Conflict can bring it. Criticism can bring it. Crisis in life."

Dr. Jack Graham: And my son, Jason, who's here with us right now today said, "Children. Children can stretch you." I said, well, you know-

Dr. Tim Clinton: Well, there's another "C."

Dr. Jack Graham: Yeah, there's another "C."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jack, it's like everybody in life have what we call our horizontal stressors. I mean, that's just the ebb and flow of life. We're going to bump into things and it's going to throw us. Everybody gets to the blues. But depression goes deeper.

Dr. Jack Graham: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's more than that. It's where you get stuck. And then the horrifying thing is, is when you have these, we call them vertical stressors, these things that drop in on us, you get the phone call and it's the C word. And these bombs, when they go off-

Dr. Jack Graham: Yeah, cancer, there's another stressor.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And when you get hit by those, those are the things. And I think people don't often understand the level of stress they're under and how potentially dangerous it is when they get hit.

Dr. Jack Graham: Yep. And unfortunately, through the years in the church, you didn't want to admit that in some way, you were weak, that somehow you were not able to handle that stress or that anxiety, the pressure that you were feeling. And frankly, there was a generation of Christians that grew up not so long ago that, the last place you would mention you were depressed would be among your Christian friends.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Oh, I know. Weakness, no faith.

Dr. Jack Graham: And this is one of the things that you're doing, and raising awareness, just like we're raising awareness to prostate cancer, we're raising awareness to breast cancer and all these awareness issues, we should raise the awareness among Christians, and that this is real. And if you think that somehow it's all spiritual, it's not all spiritual. My prayer life was the best I knew how, up-to-date. My faith was strong going in. God was blessing our lives. But I was hit by this out of nowhere, like a Mack truck hitting me, leaving me. And the thing is, it lies to you. The other thing about depression that I discovered, it lies to you with things like, "You're never going to get better." You used the word stuck a moment ago.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah.

Dr. Jack Graham: "You're stuck like this." And I began to think, "My ministry is over. I'm never going to be the same. I'm never going to get through this. It's never going to change. It's like the storm rolls in the lightning, the thunder's there and, it's never leaving." And that's a lie. Now, there are people who suffer chronic, long-term, depressive illnesses. And we know that. Mine was episodic due to a major stress in life. And much of it, I don't know how much, but a lot of people, that's

the kind of depression and anxiety they have. But we did get through it. I had a good friend of mine tell me, "Jack, there's never been a sunset that there's not been a sunrise." And that simple little thing, almost simplistic thing, I can't tell you much that encouraged me.

I kept asking Deb, my wife, and God bless her because she walked with me, she had never seen me in this state at all, but I kept asking, "Am I going to be okay?" I must have asked her a hundred times. "Am I going to be okay?" Because I kept thinking, "I'm not going to be okay." And just to hear those simple words, "You're going to be okay," that really helped get me through another day. And then eventually for me, I can only talk about me, it was like, the clouds just went away. It just gradually, and they just, the storm left. And I realized, "Hey, I hadn't thought about this in days."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Wow.

Dr. Jack Graham: When you're in the middle of one of these things, it's all you can think about. Your mind's revving, your mind ... And you're thinking, thinking, thinking, thinking. And then one day you realize, "I hadn't thought about that in days." And then it becomes weeks and months. And this is helping somebody right now.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yes.

Dr. Jack Graham: Because I'm just telling you, there are people who think, "I'm forever like this. It's never going to change. It's ruining my life, my marriage, my career, and everything." But there's never been a sunset that there hasn't been a sunrise. And that's especially true for a Christian.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You're listening to Family Talk, a division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, your host. Our special in-studio guest, Dr. Jack Graham, brand new work called *Reignite: Fresh Focus for an Enduring Faith*. Pastor Graham is also great leader of our day, the great Prestonwood church in Plano, Texas, a good friend of the ministry, and a delightful conversation. Jack, I want to stay with the thought life piece just for a moment, because what happens is, the negativity begins to consume you, and we're learning now that the brain begins to spin. And there's a word that we're talking about, it's called rumination. You begin to dwell on these things.

Dr. Jack Graham: I learned that word well during my time.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. Jack, help us understand that you're right, you've got to reframe. Because I'm hearing you say, "Tim, it's like, I had a reset in my mindset. I had a reset. I had a reframe."

Dr. Jack Graham: Yep.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Getting out of that funk is tough though.

Dr. Jack Graham: Mm-hmm. There's nothing, in some ways, that you can do to force your way out, to push your way out. If I could have changed it with positive thinking, it would have happened in 30 seconds. Because yes, there was a lot of negativity and there was fear, and part of my fear was the cancer. Is it coming back? Am I going to die of this? I was face-to-face with mortality for the first time in my life, as far as I knew. So in one way, you certainly cannot just by good thoughts, change it. Your body has to change. Your brain has to change. That's why, and I'm open about this in the book, I needed some balance. I went to therapy and I took medication. I hated the idea of doing that, and there are Christians who say you should never take medication for mental health issues. Just read your Bible and pray more. And I believe that's wrong. My friend, Tommy Nelson, who's a wonderful pastor here in North Texas, and he actually has chronic, and he's very open about this, chronic-

Dr. Tim Clinton: I've interviewed Tommy many times.

Dr. Jack Graham: So, he's talking about taking medication. He said, "I got to the point, I would have taken rat dung if it had made me feel better."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Because why? You're so desperate. You need something. And you know what, Jack, we're in such a different day now, when it comes to medications. A lot of people think if you take it, it puts you in a stupor, you get weird. No, actually, it helps clean out, brings clarity, if you're on the right thing. Med management is really important, medical management.

Dr. Jack Graham: Sure.

Dr. Tim Clinton: But Jack, you're right. It can be a real gift. Let's stay with this just for a moment, because often people think their thoughts are who they are. I want to be careful here, because we know it's the renewing of our minds that has to take place. But a lot of people think that if you think a negative thought, that's who you are. And that is what we're trying to get rid of. We've got to replace that stinking thinking, those negative thoughts, because everybody has crazy thoughts every now and then. It's, "am I living in that or not? And can I reframe it or not?" You help us, in the book, and you said this was about a 12-month journey, that time can become a friend. Truth is a friend. Thankfulness is a friend here. The right thoughts are a friend. And you used the word therapy. You know me, I'm a big proponent of people seeking out mental health care, that having someone come alongside of you. We're going to talk about your four pillars next here in a moment. Those "T's" I thought were really, really insightful.

Dr. Jack Graham: Yeah. And that's what I hung the first 60 pages of the book, is about my story. I don't want, if you're going to pick up this book, if you want to read this book, it is my story, I open up, I tell the truth about what happened to me. God is the God of all comfort, and with the comfort that we are comforted, we can

comfort others. And I'm a better pastor. I'm a better minister. Because now, somebody tells me they're depressed, I know what that feels like. There might've been a time in my life, as a young pastor especially, who didn't understand these things, where if somebody told me they were depressed, I would have said, "Well, get over it. Get yourself back up. Get up. Get moving." And there is value in getting up and getting moving and getting exercise. Exercise-

Dr. Tim Clinton: But if you're really depressed, it's tough to get out of the bed.

Dr. Jack Graham: It is because you're exhausted. I was, and I'm sure everybody has-

Dr. Tim Clinton: Consumed. You're not sleeping. Or you're sleeping too much, or whatever.

Dr. Jack Graham: You're not sleeping. They torture people with sleeplessness. And it's torturous, and I wasn't sleeping for a long time. So for me, it was exchanging lies for truth. And I talk about that in the book a lot, that Satan lies, you lie to yourself, and that's why you have to be in the truth, in the Word. And I truly can say, all those promises of God ... One thing that happens to you in depression, you can't concentrate very well. Reading your Bible, reading anything becomes very hard. But I had memorized a lot of Scriptures in my life. And those Scriptures were with me. And I just kept-

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's the truth that was soaking in.

Dr. Jack Graham: And the truth of God was transformed and renewed in my mind.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Spinning those thoughts. That's why Paul said in Philippians 4:8, "Those things that are lovely, just, of good report, and so much more, think on those things."

Dr. Jack Graham: And meditation.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Thought stopping, thought replacement becomes so important. Men in particular seem to have a real problem. I saw a title of a book years ago on male depression. This was the title; *I Don't Want to Talk About It*. Because we lock into that abyss alone. And such a gift for men that in this, I've got to start grinding, if you will, in that direction. Men want a plan. They need instruction. "Tell me what to do. God help me."

Dr. Jack Graham: Mm-hmm. Yes. And one thing I've also read about men in particular, one of the biggest signs or symptoms of depression in men, I believe Archibald Hart especially focuses on this, is anger. A lot of the anger you see in particular with men is really a mask for depression. And of course, I've also heard you could tell us that depression is anger turned inward.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Anger turned inward.

Dr. Jack Graham: It's just that seething rage that is in, and ultimately your system shuts down, your brain shuts down.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I feel like I can't do anything.

Dr. Jack Graham: Yeah, but we just want to keep it to ourselves. I did. And I'm now saying, "Look, I want you to know what happened to me because if it happened to me, it could happen to you." And it's the common cold, depression, mental health issues. And most people battle it in some way or another, and great people in life have supported it. Go back to the Bible. Start with Moses who was so upset, so stressed with the children of Israel that he prayed to die. He said, "It's enough. I don't want to live anymore." Same thing happened to Jonah. He'd been in a great revival experience with Jonah, he was mad at God. His problem was an anger problem. And he said, "Just take my life. I'm done." Go with Jesus to the garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus was so stressed, bearing the sins of the world, drinking the cup of wrath, that his very blood vessels, the capillaries of his skin, burst. And he was oozing out blood under this extreme stress.

No one is immune. Great people like Churchill and Abraham Lincoln, the great British preacher, perhaps the greatest preacher since Paul, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Luther, another one, all battled episodes of depression. It is the human condition. And back to where we started, suffering and a theology of suffering and how to suffer and do it well is very important for every Christian.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Jack, let's close this way. The heart of your book, it's about returning to God's Word.

Dr. Jack Graham: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Flooding your mind with that. It's about prayer. It's about the church. I call it people fuel. We need each other more, not less. Jack, it's about a victory mindset. You challenge us to grow in Christ and then to go with God. Ultimately God wants to use your story.

Dr. Jack Graham: Yeah, evangelism and witnessing and sharing your faith.

Dr. Tim Clinton: People are going to hit the wall, some listening right now, are there. They've turned this way up and they're crying out to God. "Please help me in my moment." Your closing thought in that season of their life.

Dr. Jack Graham: When you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and mental health issues can feel like the valley of shadow of death.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah, they can.

Dr. Jack Graham: I felt like, at times, a dead man walking. And it was darkness begging for light. You're in the darkness, whether it's grief, whether it's loneliness, whether it's

depression, anxiety, all these issues that we face, it's a valley. But the promise of the 23rd Psalm and really the promise of our shepherd is that, not only do you go in it, but you go through it. And I did pray along the way, "Lord don't let me just go through this. Help me to grow through this. Help me to experience your presence like never before." And I find in the 23rd Psalm, when David's talking there, he's first talking about the Lord. He's saying, "The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me in the still waters."

He's talking in the third person about God, about the greatness of God, the shepherd, who cares for us. But when he gets in the valley, something changes and he stops talking about the Lord and starts talking to the Lord. He says, "Your rod and your staff is with me. Your presence is in the presence of mine enemies. You anoint my head with oil." It's now you, you, you. And I know this for me, God became so real and so ever-present in the darkest hour. And I've seen that as a pastor. I've now experienced it as a pastor. So for that person right now that you find yourself in a deep, dark valley and it feels really bad, it's one of the worst feelings I've ever experienced, then just know you're there for a season and the shepherd is leading you through. "And surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Dr. Tim Clinton: You'll get through this. Well, Dr. Jack Graham, on behalf of Dr. Dobson and his wife, Shirley, who have deep love for you, their family, the entire team, we love and appreciate you and salute this great new work. What a gift to the church, to us all.

Dr. Jack Graham: Thank you. Thank you. Well, God reignited my life. As I said, I'm on fire. That was 12 years ago. I'm cancer free. That's great news. And it's like those disciples walking along the road to Emmaus, it became a road of hope when Jesus was with them. And then they ultimately said the risen Christ gave them this hope, and they said, "Didn't our hearts burn within us when we walked with him in the way." And so it's ultimately, let your heart ignite again, be on fire again. If you feel burned out, broken, hurt, wounded, seek the risen Christ and ultimately you will burn again.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Thanks for joining us.

Roger Marsh: Well, that was an important and vulnerable conversation with Pastor Jack Graham on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. This program is another installment in our Family Talk "Best Of 2021" collection. In fact, if you would like a copy of our 2021 Best Of CD set visit drjamesdobson.org/bestof2021. That's drjamesdobson.org/bestof2021 to request your copy of the six CD Family Talk Best Of Broadcast 2021 collection. It's yours as our way of thanking you for a suggested donation of \$50. Thanks so much for inviting Family Talk into your home, your car, or we're wherever you might be listening to us. I'm Roger Marsh, hoping you'll 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.