



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Positive Psychology: God's Design for You – Part 2

Guest(s): Valorie Burton

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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 back to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Today, we are bringing you the conclusion of a fantastic presentation given by Valorie Burton. Valorie gave this address earlier this year to a group of thousands of women at an extraordinary women's event in Griffin, Georgia. Well, you can really feel the energy in the room as Valorie speaks, and we are thrilled to be able to show her presentation with you.

Valorie Burton is an international speaker and the CEO of the Coaching and Positive Psychology Institute. Valorie has written 13 books, including *Let Go of the Guilt*, *It's About Time*, and *Successful Women Think Differently*. She has appeared on the *Today Show*, *CNN*, and *Dr. Oz*, and has spoken for hundreds of organizations all around the globe. And most importantly, Valorie is a devout Christian. She and her husband Jeff live on a ranch south of Atlanta with their children.

On yesterday's broadcast, Valorie Burton spoke about the clearing of the noise in your life so that you can actually hear God's speak. Today, she's going to talk more about God's plan for your life. So let's go there right now.

Valorie Burton: The next thing the Scripture says that really stands out to me is very simple. Be strong, be strong and courageous, but I'm going to start with strong because we know that this phrase be strong and courageous appears throughout the Bible. You'll find it repeatedly in Deuteronomy. You'll find it in Exodus. We find it here in 1 Corinthians. Why does God continually tell us to be strong? And how is He telling you right now to be strong?

When I went back to grad school to study positive psychology, one of the statistics that really stood out to me was this idea that positive emotion actually makes us stronger. That happiness in and of itself expands your ability to deal with adversity and with stress. That happiness literally builds like a cushion over time so that when you're dealing with difficult times it's like for falling onto a mattress. But when we've been dealing with a lot of negative emotion, that

cushion gets flat and it's like falling onto concrete. And all I could think about was the Scripture that tells us that the joy of the Lord is your strength. That laughter is good medicine. I kept saying to myself over and over again, "Isn't this interesting that God's word shows up in its own way in the research around happiness?"

In fact, if you look at certain translations in the Greek of blessed, the word is interchangeable with happy. God made your body in such a way that when you feel happy, the chemicals that go to your brain when you feel happy actually strengthen you, actually broaden your ability to think and to see options and your creativity. God made you in that way. God wants you to find joy even in your difficulties because it strengthens you.

So, whenever you hear somebody.... Sometimes as believers, we can just kind of frown about God doesn't care about you being happy. Happiness is just what happens. No, happiness is not just what happens. In fact, one of my favorite pieces of research says that happiness literally is not simply about circumstances. When they follow people over time who have strokes and have disabilities or have lost a close loved one, they will find that yes, happiness dips for a time. But within two to three years, people rise to their previous level of happiness. And we can say, "How is that?" Because you have a happiness set point. And so once you get through it, you get used to your new normal and God restores that sense of joy.

Happiness is not simply about your circumstances, but does that not sound familiar if you look at Paul and what he said? "I can be content no matter my circumstances, whether abased or abounding living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Your happiness does not need to be about your circumstance. Your circumstances may not be what you want, but your strength is in finding your gratitude that God is with you no matter where you go, that God is still there and he's trying to do something in your circumstances. Search for what that thing is, because the joy of the Lord is your strength.

Over the last 50 years or so, women's happiness has actually started to decline. When I talk to baby boomer women and older, as soon as I say, "Why do you think women would've started to get less happy after 1972?" Because that's where the research starts to see the decline. And they'll say things like, "Well, all the expectations got a lot higher." "Our options opened up. Yeah, that's great, but now I'm conflicted about what I should be doing. No matter what choice I make, I feel like I might be condemned. If I choose that I'm going to go for a career, I feel I'm going to be condemned as a mother. If I'm not married, I feel like people are going to say, 'Well it's because all you care about is your job.' And if I decide I'm going to stay home, 'Well, you're wasting your talent. Are you going to go back to work? What are you doing?'" We as women feel like, no matter what we do, we're going to be judged for what we do.

And in the meantime, things have become a lot easier quite frankly. As women have moved and made such great strides in the workplace, what we've done is we've normalized two people working and now it's a necessity for two people oftentimes to work. And that pressure of feeling like I've got to be great at work and I've got to be great at home. And there's no way to do both great all the time. And so now I'm feeling guilty. Anybody in here? Am I talking to anybody? Is it just me? I'm just wondering. Because as a speaker, I can tell you that when I became a mom... actually it was before I became a mom, I still felt guilty. I should not be working on the weekends. The research actually shows that even women that are 25 with no kids feel guilty about working.

So, when we think about what we have done that's impacted our happiness, what we have to ask ourselves is, "What brings me joy? What are the unique things God has placed in me that when I do them time just passes by?" What brings you joy and have you scheduled it in? You have permission to take your phone out right now, not to text or do social media, but just put in a date with yourself. It might be a hobby you enjoy, maybe it's that calligraphy or the crochet or the gardening or the tennis or whatever it is. Find the thing that brings you joy because it's your strength. I discovered this in a major way over 12 years ago. I found myself going through the most difficult challenge in my life. I had been married at that point for six years and found myself going through a divorce. I don't think anybody gets married expecting to go through a divorce. I mean, there might be a few celebrities that plan it that way for publicity, but for most of us, we get married expecting that's for life.

And there was a critical moment where it hit me what I was going through. If you've ever had something really difficult happen and it feels surreal, but there's a moment where somehow it just becomes real. And that moment I was standing in my kitchen and as it hit me that my life was about to change in a major way, I started crying and I was bent over the kitchen counter and the tears were just pouring and I could see the puddle building up and the crying turn from crying to something I'd never done before. I was wailing. I had heard about wailing women. It sounded like maybe an exaggeration or just something that happened in a faraway land with tragedy in there. I found myself wailing from the depths of my soul.

And as I was wailing, I was thinking, "Is my life over?" I was 36, going through a divorce, had never had any children. All of those things were my dream. And I thought, "Have I missed it? Is it going to happen?" And in fact, the crying or the wailing was so out of control, I thought, "I can't waste this cry on just myself." Do you understand what I mean? Like if you cry bad enough, you want somebody to see it. Somebody needs to feel sorry for you. And so in the middle of all my thoughts, I was like, "I need to call somebody. Somebody's got to see this because when I try to explain it later, they're not going to get it. They're not going to get how bad it was at that... Who can I call?" And I decided, "I'm going to call my mother." Now that's proof that I was not thinking clearly, because when you want pity, you do not call a resilient woman who's been through something.

And so, I called my mother and she knew what I was going through, but she had never heard me like this. And you know, when you're upset and then you start trying to talk about it, it gets even worse. And so I don't even know what I was saying. She didn't know what I was saying. "I think I'm losing my mind. I think my life is over. I think I'm going crazy." She said, "Life and death is in the power of the tongue. You are not going crazy. Your life is not over. And you only speak what is true. You are not the first person to go through this." She said, "Now, listen, you sound like you look pretty ugly right now." I was like, "This is not what I called for." She said, "Listen, I want you to go in the bathroom wash your face. Do not let him come home and see you crying like this. You wash your face." I said, "Okay." She said, "And take a walk, five, 10 minutes. Call me back and we'll talk." I didn't get what I wanted y'all, but I did what she said. Honor thy parents. Yes, I went to the bathroom, washed my face, I walked down the street. I came back. I called her.

It's not that I never cried again, but I never cried again from that woe is me place. And I made a decision in that conversation. I said, "I will walk through this fire, but it will not consume me." And I said something that I began to repeat over and over again in the years to come, "I will be better and not bitter." I would say it over and over again, "I will be better and not bitter." In fact, it gave me hope, the very idea that maybe in walking through this difficulty, I could somehow come out on the other side better. That became my goal. That someone would get inspiration from the fact that even though things didn't go the way I planned, even though it seem like I got side-swiped into a ditch, I was going to take every lesson God would give me from the experience.

I was so worried about what everybody else would think. And God said, "That's your pride. You're so concerned about what people think. You're concerned about whether churches will invite you to speak and whose fault they will think the divorce was. Quit worrying about everybody else and seek my face and the lessons I'm trying to teach you through this experience." And so I just kept walking forward. Some days it was hard. I remember moving down here to Atlanta. I was in DC at the time. I didn't know where to move and I just felt God's hand saying move south where the people you love, who love you are. And in the midst of that, I was about three and a half years into it. And I'll never forget one morning. I'm making my bed about three months before my 40th birthday and I'm praying... You ever pray out loud? It's a benefit of living alone. You can just talk and nobody thinks you're crazy.

And I was just praying out loud, "Lord, listen, I'm going to be 40 in January. It's September. You may have forgotten I've asked if you could send the one along, whoever he is. I'm not even dating anyone. Lord, if you could just hurry up. If you could just fix it." You know what I mean? "If you could just fix it." And I said that a couple times, "I need you to fix this." And I heard clearly in my spirit, the Holy Spirit said, "Valorie, there is nothing to fix." I was like, "This is Valorie Burton. I just want to make sure you know I'll be 40. And I talked to the doctor at my most recent appointment and she said to me, 'You look young, but your eggs are old.' I just want to be clear. So, Lord, I just need you to kind of fix this.

And He said, "No, no, no, no. There's nothing for me to fix. You're exactly where I need you to be at exactly the time. I need you to trust me and I need you to be happy. Now, not happy when I fix it, not happy when I give you what you've been asking for, happy now." It stopped me in my tracks. "What do you mean be happy now?" He said, "You've been holding your breath. You've been holding your happiness hostage to your circumstances. And I need you to learn how to be happy while you're waiting for me to deliver what you've asked for. I need you to make a decision that you're going to be happy even if I don't deliver what you've asked for."

And I went through the process where I finally said, "Well, what if God never sends the husband? What if I never become a mother? What am I going to do? Am I just going to be miserable? Am I just going to keep fussing that God has not fixed it? Or am I going to choose to live the life that God has blessed me with to see the blessings in it? To say, 'Well, if this isn't what God meant for me, maybe I need to just get with his plan.'"

I began thinking about people I admired so much that didn't have kids that never got married. It was kind of funny. God was like, "Well, you might look at my Son, Jesus, maybe Paul. I mean, there's a lot of people I use in amazing ways that don't have these things you think you need to be happy." And so I finally said, "Okay, God, I'm going to do that. I'm just going to notice that my life is pretty blessed. I do work. I love I have... My parents are still alive. Gosh, Lord, I've got great family. I've got friends. I live right here where I want to live with the freedom that I have. I have so much to be happy about. Lord, you know what? I'm just going to be happy. And if it's 10 more years and I'm 50, and it's the same thing, you know what? I'm going to travel."

My girlfriends that are married, they keep calling me. They seem jealous. I told them I was having Rice Krispies for dinner and they seem jealous that I didn't have to cook for anybody. So, I'm going to find the joy in what I have right now. And what's so interesting is as I just decided to be happy, just a few months later, something interesting happened. I logged back on to Facebook. I know you're like, "She's always on Facebook." But Lord seems to talk to me sometimes through Facebook. And so, on this particular day, I log on Facebook and a high school friend of mine had tagged my book *Successful Women Think Differently*. He was at the Atlanta Airport and walked by and saw my face on the cover of the book and said, "Hey, that's Val Burton." And he took a picture with it and just said, "Should I get this book?" And our friends replied, "Sure, Jeff, if you read it, I'm sure you could be a successful woman too. Get the book." And we started communicating and y'all might know where this story is going.

As we began communicating, I realized he lived south of Atlanta. I lived north of Atlanta, even though we grew up in Denver, Colorado, where we went to middle school and high school together. And he said, "I think I might want to write children's books at some point. Maybe we could just chat about book writing." He was making that up y'all. I mean, he did want to write children's books, but he was just looking for a reason for lunch. He said, "Let's meet for

lunch." He drove up to Buckhead and we had lunch. And I'm telling you, I got out of the car and he was standing there. Now this was just lunch. This was not a date. You ever get excited because you're just having lunch and it's not a date, but you think maybe next time it could be a date? Anyway, I get out of the car and he's standing there and I suddenly have like butterflies. I was like, "Valorie, calm your little self down. This is not a date. This is somebody you went to high school with 20 years ago. That's all it is."

And we sat down and we had lunch. And as we talked, there was just this feeling. And then he kept talking about his children. I mean, he just kept talking, "I have to leave at this time because I got to pick up my girls." And I thought, "Oh, I'm being rude." Because if you don't have kids, you don't realize people with kids want you to talk about their kids and it took me a minute to catch a clue. And I said, "Oh, what are their names?" And he was so proud of their names y'all.

I had written names if I ever had girls in my journal. One of the names was two. I had written Sophia Grace. I thought it was such a beautiful name. The other name I had written was Olivia. He said, "The oldest one, I named her, her name is Sophia Grace." I know. That's what I said, but I tried to look like... I said, "That's lovely. I've always thought those two names together were lovely. What's the other one's name?" And he said, "Her name is Addison Olivia." And I said, "That's nice. It's nice." I don't even know what else to say.

It was a little over a year later that Jeff and I married, that I became bonus mom to Sophie and Addie. And even through our challenges, trying to have a child, getting pregnant, having a miscarriage, both of us always had a dream, from the time you were teenagers, both of us that we would adopt. And so we adopted a baby boy in 2015, Alexander. And I can tell you, even through that, I don't even begrudge not having biological children because the child God blessed me with is the child I'm meant to raise.

And I'm telling you this story because the joy of the Lord is your strength. Quit trying to tell God what He needs to do for you and when He needs to do it for you, because He's saying to you, "Be happy right now where you are." You don't have to be happy about what's happening, but find the joy because God is trying to bring other people to Him, through you. And they are looking at how you go through your difficulties. And He's saying, "Will you find a way through the midst of this challenge to be better and not bitter? Will you find my joy? Will you find your strength and your gratitude and your thankfulness and your perseverance?"

Be strong and be courageous. I know the fear and the anxiety is normal. You don't even need to beat yourself up about it. But what I do know is God has not given you a spirit of fear. He didn't say you wouldn't feel fear. He said, "I haven't given you a spirit of fear." Meaning you are not to operate in that fear.

If you want to be more resilient, if you want to get through these difficult times, I'm asking you right now to find your joy. And I'm going to leave you with this. Joy comes in many forms. It comes through our gratitude. It comes through our ability to serve others. It comes through us simply connecting face to face so much of what we need. And some of you just need to be intentional about finding the things that trigger your joy. I'm going to give you just three very simple ones.

Number one, I want you every single night to just ask yourself: "What was the best thing that happened today? What made me smile today and why was it meaningful?" The research shows that when we express gratitude and then reflect on why we are grateful, we deepen that sense of positive emotion.

Number two, some of y'all just need to play. Play is a happiness trigger. Some of you don't know how to play. Play with your pet. Play with your children. Play somebody else's children. Get permission first. Play with other people's pets. Just play. The research shows men bomb through play. Men love to play wrestling, basketball, golf. They belong side by side. But as women, we often don't take the time to just do something we love purely for the joy of it. You don't have to be good at it. Sing, dance. Do like me. I'm terrible at tennis, but I think the outfits are cute. So I give myself permission to play tennis.

The last thing I want you to do is really simple; smile. Did you know that we don't just smile because we're happy, but God made our bodies in such a way that when you have a full-on smile, it's called the Duchenne smile after the French physician that discovered this. That when you smile and your cheeks puff up... Can y'all do that? Some of y'all are just glaring at me. Smile. Let me see some teeth. When you smile, your cheeks puff up, your eyes crinkle. You actually trigger the release of serotonin and endorphins to the brain. God made you in such a way that if you will just smile, he will release drugs into your brain that make you feel better.

And even if you don't feel like smiling, the research says, if you just put a pencil between your teeth, like you're in a bad mood, just put a pencil between your teeth and try to think about somebody that gets on your nerves at the same time. It's hard to be mad while you are smiling. If you don't have a pencil, the research says, just make a hard E sound. Some of y'all are going to go home tonight, somebody's going to say, "What's for dinner?" And you're thinking, "I have been at a conference all day. Did you not think about dinner earlier than this?" And you're going to walk off. Just go E... Just go to the kitchen, E... Release some of that serotonin. Are y'all with me on this? Find your joy. And when you find your joy, you find your strength. God bless you, ladies.

Roger Marsh:

Well, Valorie certainly has seemed to find her joy. That's for sure. What an encouraging presentation today from Valorie Burton, given and recorded in Griffin, George at an Extraordinary Women's event earlier this year.

For me, the Bible verses that kept coming to mind while Valorie was talking were Proverb 3:5-6. Now I'm sure you might know these verses by heart, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." That passage can be easy to quote when things are going well, but when life doesn't look like what we expected it to look like, it can be hard to trust that God really has good things in mind for us, but believe me, He does. And like Valorie Burton just said, God calls us to be joyful now. Not just when things are going our way, but today, because if we are truly following Him, He has us right where he wants us to be.

Now, if you'd like to learn more about Valorie Burton or the ministry of Extraordinary Women Ministries, you can visit drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. That's drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. While you're there, you can listen to any of Valorie's presentation that you might have missed from today's program or yesterday's broadcast. You can also request a CD copy of this two-day program to keep or share. Again, go to drjamesdobson.org/broadcast, or give us a call at (877) 732-6825. Thanks again for joining us today here on Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. God's richest blessings to you and your family, and 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.