



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Homeschooling Today- Part 2

Guest(s): Heidi and Jay St. John

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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: Hello, and thank you for listening to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh with a trivia question for you. Did you know that Dr. Dobson's wife, Shirley, once taught at a public school in California before deciding to be a stay-at-home mom to their two children, Danae and Ryan? Also, did you know that Dr. Dobson taught at a public middle school early in his career as well? Doctor has many fond memories of influencing those young minds. He and Shirley consider education to be vital for a child's life beyond the obvious tools and skill sets that are instilled in the early years.

Dr. Dobson will be the first to say, though, that the schools today are very different from what they were when he taught or even from when his children attended public schools in the 1980s. Well, today on Family Talk, we are presenting part two of a two-part conversation on this very important topic. Dr. Dobson talked homeschooling with Jay and Heidi St. John. This is a classic interview from 2010, but the concepts and principles are spot on even for today. You'll want to hear this if you have kids in school, or if you know someone who does, perhaps you're a grandparent and you want to help your kids steward their kids in this area. With so much evil and deception in today's culture, right now might be the right time to consider removing your child from the public or private school system and educating them from home.

Now, please know that we are not trying to tear down or discourage public school teachers or administrators. There are so many faithful Christians in the public school systems who have dedicated their lives to reaching the next generation. But here at Family Talk, we are keenly aware of the war on children that is being waged in our society. Many public school teachers are being instructed to teach a curriculum that embraces LGBTQ ideology, sexual perversion, critical race theory and more. On top of that, many students face tremendous amounts of peer pressure to participate in destructive behavior. And they're continually being introduced to worldviews that are definitely anti-God.

Friend, our number one job as parents is to teach our children about Jesus Christ and the gospel. If a child's school is getting in the way of you discipling your children, well, it may be time to consider other options. Now, if homeschooling sounds intimidating or even impossible, our guests on today's program have some encouragement for you. And I want to remind you that according to a recent poll, about 11% of households in America now have at least one child who is being homeschooled. In fact, one recent survey showed that 72% of families who began homeschooling during the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to do so, rather than returning to public school, even though they never planned a homeschool before the pandemic.

Needless to say, homeschooling parents are not alone. There are many resources available to them that fit their needs and the needs and learning styles of their children. And there is a growing community of homeschool families just waiting to encourage and help families who are just starting out on the homeschool journey.

Jay and Heidi St. John are the founders and executive directors of Firmly Planted Ministries, a para-church organization that is dedicated to training and equipping parents to disciple their children the way that God intended, as clearly laid out in the Bible. The St. John's travel and speak together throughout the year encouraging couples in their marriages and parenting journeys using God's word as their primary source for spiritual growth and discussion. Let's go now to the conclusion of Dr. Dobson's conversation with Jay and Heidi St. John here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Heidi and Jay, we enjoyed our conversation with you so much last time. I say that personally, I really got into what you were saying, and we discussed the way you and your family have approached homeschooling because there are different ways to do this. So thank you for being with us again today.

Heidi St. John: You're welcome. Thanks for having us.

Jay St. John: Good to be here.

Dr. James Dobson: Jay and Heidi, the aspect of homeschooling that means the most to me is the protection of that little spirit-

Heidi St. John: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: That is so fragile and so easily wounded. And you can build a little world that allows that child to grow up in a healthy way and not get bludgeoned. Children are brutal to each other.

Heidi St. John: Yes, they are.

Jay St. John: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: They really are. And that starts in kindergarten or even before. And what you do is that you allow those youngsters to get established and accepting who they are before they're thrown into that kind of dog-eat-dog world. That's what Ray Moore put his great emphasis on and I like it.

Jay St. John: That's right.

Heidi St. John: Oh yeah.

Jay St. John: You hear all the time about socialization, what do you do about that? But I have to say that I'm impressed over and over at the socialized status of these homeschooled kids. In Clark County, there's a homeschool sports program and there's about 200 kids there. And they did track recently and I'm watching all these kids and realizing this is amazing. And these older kids helping these younger ones, the younger ones not afraid of the older ones, but learning from them how to run better, how to pass the Baton, how to do the shot put, all these things. It's impressive. And I think those things that they learn at that age, they carry onto through their lives and I think that's why they're so successful when they go out to either college and out in the workforce. They're not afraid of whatever might come their way, because they know how to deal with people.

Dr. James Dobson: And what I am learning right now as a result of new studies that are coming out is that Christians are not losing their kids in college like we used to think. They're not losing them in high school. They're losing them in middle school.

Heidi St. John: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: And elementary school.

Heidi St. John: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: That's where we're losing them. And if you going to make your contribution spiritually, you better do it early.

Heidi St. John: I think one of the things that we forget, and when we're putting our kids in school and we're not really looking to see what it is that they're learning and who is teaching them is that education is never neutral. We've grown up thinking education was neutral. We could just put them in school and that'd be the end of it. And it's reading, writing, and arithmetic, but it's not reading, writing, and arithmetic. There is a world view that is being imparted to those children when they're very, very young. And Jesus said in Luke 6:40, that when a student is fully trained, he'll be like his teacher. We need to be thinking about who is teaching our children and looking at education as an opportunity for discipleship. When we talk to homeschool parents or people who are thinking about homeschooling, we remind them, education is discipleship. Who is discipling your child?

Dr. James Dobson: I mentioned at the start of the program last time that the modern homeschool's movement started in the early 1980s, but the homeschool movement was well established in the 1800s.

Heidi St. John: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: And the 1700s. Nearly every child was taught at home. There were no public schools. And they learned the classics. They learned to read and write and compute at home. And it worked. If you look at our founding fathers and how they learned and what they read, and so it is not a new concept, we've just rediscovered it.

Heidi St. John: That's right.

Jay St. John: That's right.

Heidi St. John: And for me, it has come over several years of realizing what my limits are, when I need a break. I really rely heavily on my husband for that. And also a network of other moms around me who are doing the same thing. They're like-minded, they can relate to me. So when I've had a difficult day, I can call up a girlfriend and say, "Hey, could you give me a hand on Friday? I just want to go spend a few hours by myself. I'm going to go to the library. I'm going to go get a cup of coffee." I think so much of it is knowing yourself. And then also, like I said before, you've got to know why you're doing what you're doing. It's just like when parenting is difficult and we have difficult days, or marriage is difficult. Sometimes you take a step back.

When I wrote my book, Jay homeschooled for me. I couldn't do both things. And I looked at him one day and I said, "I'm going to burn out. I can't do this and this." And fortunately, because of what the Lord's asked us to do, he's in a position to be able to do that. And I'll tell you, it was an eye-opener for him.

Jay St. John: Oh yeah.

Heidi St. John: I came home from writing, because I would write eight hours a day and I'd come home at the end of the day. And he, one time I came home and he said, "How have you been doing this for nine years? This is so hard." And it reminded me. And I told him, I was like, "Oh boy, I understand." We had to sit down and say, "What's going to work for us? What can we do? What can we not do?" You can't do it all. And so for you to look at me and say, "You're superwoman." Ask my children. They'll tell you, I am decidedly not superwoman. I highly recommend by the way, having older children. Our kids are almost 19 now, 16, 13. And they're wonderful help around the house. And it took me a long time to get to that point. So I have more help now than I had before. And I had to adjust as I went along. And when things don't work, stop doing them. Step back, say, what is it that's frustrating me, because you can usually trace it to something.

If you don't have enough time, I told my children, I'm going to homeschool you. We're going to start at nine in the morning and at two, mom is done. If you're not done at two o'clock, you're going to have to come back to me like every other child in the United States at seven, when it's time for homework and you'll have to finish that day's assignment. But I need from two to six to go shopping or get laundry done or whatever it is, I had to come up with a schedule. And my kids will tell you, one year that schedule will work and one year it won't work. And so I'll have to redo it again and go back to what works. It's constantly adjusting and not being rigid. You've got to be flexible. And the other thing is to listen to your children. If your kids are frustrated and they're frustrated by me or they're frustrated by what we're learning, I want to listen to them so we can adjust it.

Jay St. John: And I want to encourage the dads out there, again, for that role that you can play in and sitting down with your wife at the beginning of the year, working through what are we going to do this year, praying about it and then helping her hold onto that resolve because it is a resolve that you both had to have. But as the husband, you have to be very sensitive and paying close attention to how she is doing. Because if she's done, you need to be able to, to say, okay, what can we do to help change this, many of the things Heidi's just shared.

Dr. James Dobson: Heidi, you have said twice that the new or perspective homeschool mom has to answer the question, "Why am I doing this?" You said it in the first program. You just said it a minute ago. What's your reason? Why did you do it? What should be the reason for homeschooling?

Heidi St. John: I think the reason that we do it is because the Lord had impressed upon Jay and I that education is discipleship. And we recognized through that, that there was so much more at stake than just who's going to teach our children math and reading and grammar, that we had an opportunity as their parents to impart a biblical worldview to them. And nothing does that like spending time with your kids. And so as we looked at the alternatives and there are a lot of them, as we looked at them, we realized that for the goal that Jay and I had for our family and for our children, if we wanted to spend time with them and really help them be equipped to deal with the culture, I believe passionately, and so does Jay, that the times we're living in are so difficult and frightening, our children are going to have to be able to stand.

We want them to know why they believe what they believe and when we're homeschooling them, we have got hours every day to impart those values to them. We'll watch the news together in the morning or in the evening and we can incorporate that into our schooling. It's an amazing opportunity. And so when it gets difficult, Jay will say to me, okay, bad day or bad week, or maybe a bad month, but we'll come back to why are we doing what we're doing. Because we want our kids when at the end of the day, and we're seeing this bear out now in the lives of our older children, when they leave our home to know who they are, to know who they are in Christ, to be able to defend their position to

the world that they live in and be able to have it be based biblically, the best opportunity for us to do that is to homeschool them.

Dr. James Dobson: Jay, that was an absolutely wonderful answer. You got to be impressed by this woman.

Jay St. John: Oh my word. Yeah, I am blessed very much.

Dr. James Dobson: That is the main reason.

Jay St. John: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: Reason is to bring your children to Christ, to bring them up with an understanding of a biblical worldview.

Jay St. John: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: And in the process, give them a great education.

Jay St. John: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: Heidi, as difficult as it has been at times with six kids and now seven, soon, as you look back on all that effort and all those tears along the way, the struggle of the whole thing, do you regret a single day of it?

Heidi St. John: No. No, no. And our daughter, as she graduated from high school, we just had a ceremony for her. There were actually several, lots of homeschool graduates actually. And the way that we did it was we walked up one side of the stage and she came up the other side in her cap and gown and she read a thank you letter to her dad and I. The graduates read a letter to their parents and then the parents were able to read a blessing to their children. It was powerful. It was so powerful. And when we gave her her diploma, which was a wonderful opportunity for us to say, "We release you. We recognize that you've accomplished this goal in your life." And when I went to hug her, I said, "Please don't go." I just love, she's a beautiful young woman, and we cried.

She goes, "Mom, thank you for all the sacrifices." Because when they get older, they recognize it is a sacrifice. She's looking at homeschooling her own children someday. And she recognizes the sacrifice that we've put into, but so worth it, so worth it. I wouldn't change a thing. I think it's really important that when you start out, surround so up by people who are like-minded, who are going to speak life into your life and not become isolated because it's a killer of homeschooling families. When a mom feels like I'm going to take this on all by myself and on the days that are difficult, if she doesn't have that support system and a network around her of someone who understands and understands, but also can continue to encourage her in her homeschooling, rather than calling up a relative, who already thinks you're crazy for doing it.

So you call that person up and you're like, "I'm having a bad day." And they're like, "Well, of course you are. Any sane person would've put their kid in school by now." That's not what you need. You need to be surrounded by people who understand why you're doing it. And then lean back into those people. We have encouraged moms for over 10 years now, find a local group and then get plugged in. That's what First Class Homeschool Ministries does is we're creating communities of homeschoolers all over the United States so that when they have those issues, they have those frustrating days, they can get life spoke into them by another mom. Or when they see that happening, conversely to someone else, they can go, "Oh man, I've been where you are and let's go have a cup of coffee." That support is really crucial.

Dr. James Dobson: Boy, our time is gone. It's just amazing. I had probably a hundred or more questions here.

Heidi St. John: Well, we can come back.

Dr. James Dobson: I know our listeners would love to hear you answer, but Jay, you were a pastor. You were on somebody's payroll.

Jay St. John: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: And you stepped down from that.

Jay St. John: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: And obviously, Heidi, you're not working outside the home.

Heidi St. John: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: And how in the world did you guys make it? And what do you say to those who are out there saying, "We're just barely getting by on two incomes? How would we do this?"

Jay St. John: We talk to families all the time who have that concern. It's actually a big deal in California because their standard of living is so high that many people don't want a homeschool because that usually requires one person to not go to work and so they don't do it. Well, there's actually a wonderful family, I wish I could remember their names in California. He's a pastor and they moved there and they said, "We are going to continue homeschooling even though we know the cost of living is higher down there. It will be harder." And she tells us, "You tell everyone that God will provide for you."

Heidi St. John: Absolutely.

Jay St. John: If you trust God to take care of you, to follow him and raise your kids to love and follow him with all your heart and soul, he will provide. He will take care of

those things. And we are living testimony of that because we have had many months we've gotten to the last day of the month and realized there is not enough money for the rest of the month.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, there are necessities that you have to think about. Healthcare is one of them with six kids. And so how do you handle those things that take money and you don't have enough of it? How have you all dealt with that?

Heidi St. John: That's a really great question. Something that we've learned through homeschooling because I no longer work outside of our home is that we have to very carefully budget for everything that we know is necessary for our family. So healthcare, we budget for food. We're budgeting for our school supplies, we budget for curriculum. It's really forced us, and a lot of times we're working with our older children so that they can see what it takes to live simply so that the mom can stay home. It's been a great opportunity actually for us to learn about provision and then learn how to make what God's given us extend to the areas that we need it to. We don't have big fancy cars that we drive. And what we discovered was our kids are just as happy. They don't need all those extraneous things that we think that we need to provide them. We live in a country that just, it's overkill. We simplified and the Lord provides miraculously.

Jay St. John: And our kids watch that. Watch us go through that and watch us pray, and then watch God provide in miraculous ways that no one could argue and then they learn from that. It's hugely important.

Dr. James Dobson: I saw it with my folks and it had an amazing impact on me. I don't want to overstate this principle that you talked about, but that's where we are in Family Talk. We started a ministry on an absolute shoestring and Shirley and I provided the money to get started. But we're depending on the Lord too.

Heidi St. John: It's exciting. It's exciting because He'll bless it. I think He blesses that step of faith and just going Lord, we see that you are doing something and so we're going to follow where you are leading. And then watching Him bring that provision every month when you don't know exactly where it's coming from. One day, Jay said to me, we're driving up to Seattle to speak and we weren't sure if we were going to have enough money to pay our house payment. And I was stressing. I don't mind telling you I was really stressing. And Jay said, I wonder if maybe what the Lord's trying to teach us is instead of stressing about where it's coming from to just go, 'Lord, you have proven yourself faithful over and over again. And we're thanking you before we even get it because we know it's coming and we know it's going to be amazing, because it's going to have to be. And so, thank you for what you're doing.'" And boy, I'll tell you what, the very next day, the most amazing things started happening. And we're seeing that, just that step of faith, walking out and just saying, "Lord, we know that wherever you're leading, you're also going to provide." It's amazing what's happening here at Family Talk for the same reason.

Dr. James Dobson: I saw it as a child. My dad had a soft heart and a soft touch and anybody who needed anything, he would give it to him. He was a minister, an evangelist and he would go someplace to speak for 10 days. And at the end of that time, they'd give him a little meager check. Those old churches didn't have anything. And he would notice that the pastor's kids didn't have shoes or had holes in their shoes or didn't have a coat for winter and he would give it back. And then he would come home and my mother would ask, what'd they pay you and he would smile and she'd say, I know you gave it away, didn't you and then we'd run out of money and we would just go to our knees and it came.

Heidi St. John: It came.

Dr. James Dobson: Over and over. One time it was \$1,200. It came on a Monday after we'd prayed that prayer on the weekend.

Heidi St. John: Isn't that amazing?

Dr. James Dobson: And that was a lot of money.

Heidi St. John: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: When I was a kid. But the Lord was there. He was faithful.

Heidi St. John: Amazing.

Dr. James Dobson: And He's getting us through this period too.

Heidi St. John: It's exciting. It's an exciting time. Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: And we are not trying to dump guilt on those women who are working or for those whose kids are in public schools, certainly not attacking public school teachers and administrators. But we are saying there's another alternative and this is what it is. And what you've heard in these two days is the very best of the ideas that are out there. Well, thank you, Heidi and Jay.

Heidi St. John: Thank you.

Jay St. John: Thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: St. John, not St. James.

Heidi St. John: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: And we do hope to see you again.

Roger Marsh: I'm Roger Marsh and you just heard the conclusion of Dr. Dobson's two-day conversation with Jay and Heidi St. John, the parents of seven children, all of

whom they have homeschooled. Here at Family Talk, we often reference the first half of Psalm 127 verse one, which says, unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. This verse says that unless God is behind our plans, they really won't amount to much in the end. The reverse is also true, when God calls us to something, he gives us the tools, time, and energy to follow that calling.

Many families feel that homeschooling is much too daunting of a task, too many financial sacrifices and too many barriers to even get started, let alone make it through an entire school year. But friend, many of those families are so surprised when they actually start to homeschool and it is doable and it is worth it.

If you're interested in learning more about homeschooling, visit our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. We have a link there for Jay and Heidi St. John's home homeschooling ministry's website. That is a great place to start if you have questions or trepidation about taking your children out of a traditional schooling setting, but you want to learn more about homeschooling. That web address again is drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. And while you're there, you can also request a CD copy of this two-part program that we've titled "Homeschooling Today." Of course, don't hesitate to give us a call as well. We are here to answer your questions about the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute and the audio ministry of Family Talk. We also love to pray with and for our listeners. So, you can call us with your prayer requests at (877) 732-6825 that's (877) 732-6825.

Thanks for making Family Talk a part of your day. Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute are completely listener supported so if you've been blessed by today's program, please consider making a tax deductible donation in support of our ministry. Your gift helps us reach more families with truth and biblical encouragement to learn more visit drjamesdobson.org or call us at (877) 732-6825. And now from Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, Dr. Tim Clinton, and all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, I'm Roger Marsh, God's blessings to you and yours.

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

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Roger Marsh:

Does your marriage feel disconnected? Are you wanting more one-on-one time with your spouse? This is Roger Marsh for Family Talk and we have a great resource for you. It's Dr. Dobson's popular work titled *Nightlight for Couples*. This devotional is full of insightful content for couples to discuss every night before you go to sleep. Now throughout the book, Dr. Dobson addresses tough marital subjects like finances, communication, intimacy, and more. Rekindle the emotional closeness in your relationship with this helpful resource. Request your copy of *Nightlight for Couples* by going to drjamesdobson.org, or call (877) 732-6825.