



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The 4 Wills of God: Discovering God's Purpose for Your Life

Guest(s): Dr. Emerson Eggerichs

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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 Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and today we're sharing the second half of a fascinating conversation between Dr. James Dobson and his friend, Dr. Emerson Eggerichs. Yesterday, Dr. Eggerichs revisited and explained the premise of his popular book, *Love & Respect*. Today, he'll be talking to Dr. Dobson about his 2018 work, entitled *The 4 Wills of God*.

Let me tell you about Dr. Dobson's guest for today's program. Dr. Emerson Eggerichs is the founder and president of Love & Respect Ministries. He previously served as senior pastor of Trinity Church in East Lansing, Michigan for nearly 20 years. Dr. Eggerichs earned his bachelor of arts in biblical studies and an MA in Communication from Wheaton College and Graduate School. He later was awarded a Master of Divinity degree from Dubuque Seminary, and a PhD in child and family ecology from Michigan State University. Dr. Eggerichs is the author of several books, including *Love & Respect* and *Cracking the Communication Code*. Emerson is married to Sarah and they have three adult children.

Roger Marsh: Here now is Dr. James Dobson and Dr. Emerson Eggerichs on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, Dr. Eggerichs, thank you for being back with us. Last time, we talked about *Love & Respect*. What a wonderful concept that is. Your book is still out there, it's still available. You've sold over two million copies, you ought to sell 10 million more because this is one of those rare concepts that really does have the power to change marriages and to preserve marriages and to prevent divorce. It's because it comes straight out of Scripture. You didn't create anything here, did you?

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: It was there before I was born, it'll be there after I'm dead. I'm irrelevant.

Dr. James Dobson: Comes down to love and respect.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Give us the formula again.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: The correlation, one of them, is when she feels unloved, she tends to react in a way that feels disrespectful to him. She's not trying to be, but that's how she appears. Then when he feels disrespect, that he reacts in a way that feels unloving. He's not trying to be unloving, but that's how she feels. This is based on Ephesians 5:33, where God commands the husband to love and the wife to respect, and I believe, in part, to prevent that crazy cycle.

But doc, again, I have to credit you. You were the one, in 2004, who saw this and you let the world know that this was very, very important. Because of your credibility and influence, this thing has gone crazy in a wholesome sense.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, if we're going to have time for your new book, we'd better get at it.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: Yes, sir.

Dr. James Dobson: The title of it is *The 4 Wills of God*. I want to hear what they are and how you came to this conclusion. First, tell me if a person can really fully understand the will of a God who doesn't speak for Himself. He speaks through His Word, but He doesn't sit down with you and say, "Now, look, this is what I want you to do."

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: You can find it in the Scripture, but how does a person come to the conclusion that these are the four biggies, this is what we absolutely must do?

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: Yes. Well, you and I both have come to that point where we trusted what Christ said, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, that you and I believe in what we call the revelatory worldview, that God is there, that Christ is His son and He has spoken. He has spoken through the prophets, He's spoken through the apostles, and He's spoken in these last days through his son. Those of us familiar with Scripture know that we're quoting key verses on that. You and I, without apology, have aligned ourselves with the world view of Christ, we believe that. We believe Abba Father's there, He loves us He's for us and He has spoken, but He isn't going to sit down with us and tell us specifically. It doesn't work that way. He's already spoken through Christ and through the apostles.

What's fascinating to me is that when we pay attention, we suddenly discover some things. There are four passages in the New Testament that are unparalleled, they're matchless. There's more to the will of God than these four, but these four identify God's will with a specific behavior. As I've mentioned to you before, I had the privilege of studying the Bible 30 hours a week for nearly

20 years. As the senior pastor, I was to exposit the Scripture, and so that gave me time to track down a lot of things.

This isn't new to me, this has been known, but I have used this now for almost 40 years of my counseling and pastoral help to people because this framework has not only helped other people, it's been the framework that Sarah and I have sought to live, my wife, Sarah and I, that these four passages have really helped us. The reason this is important is there is a type of person out there that fears missing God's will. They panic, it is this fear that they're going miss it, they're going to do something wrong.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, I can imagine many people feeling like I have on occasion, when and faced with a very important decision, I just wish the Lord Jesus would come and sit across the table from me and tell me exactly what He wants, "Take this job, don't take that one, move here, have another child," those very practical, everyday kinds of questions where you would really, I think most of us, would like to get a telegram or something. Tell me exactly what to do and I'll go and do it.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: But He gives you the Word and He says, "Follow these principles and you will see it."

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: And that's what you have written about.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: Yes. I believe in signs, wonders and miracles. I believe, as you do, that there are moments when God heals somebody and the medical profession itself said, "This is beyond our grasp how anything like this could have happened." That'd be a miracle. Signs are things that it points to, the fishermen were told "cast your net over the side." Well, they'd fished all night and then they had this great catch. Well, that's not a miracle because there could be carpenters standing there watching this, well, that's just a coincidence, but they knew that was a sign. Then there are moments where there are wonders. It's like we get chills, it's like we just sense something. It's not necessarily a sign, but God showed up, something happened here.

All of us want to live in these miraculous signs and wondrous things, but that isn't always the way He works. When you study the prophets, it can be three decades between miracles. The broader point we're making is God comes crashing in at certain moments, but those moments are not going to be daily. How do we live week after week when those kinds of interventions are not there? How do we know we're doing His will? How do we know we're not missing it?

But I, in this book, have unpacked these four passages that, in the simplest way it's this, these four passages say this is the will of God. If you do these four, then you're doing the will of God. How can you miss the will of God if you're doing it?

Dr. James Dobson: Well, let's get to them.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: Okay.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's talk about them, what's the first?

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: Well, the first one that I highlight is what Jesus said in John 6:40, "This is the will of my father, that you behold the son and he who beholds the son and believes in him will have eternal life and I myself will raise him up on the last day." In this, Jesus is saying, "This is the will of my father. It is a unique thing," and what is it? Believe in Jesus Christ.

Dr. James Dobson: That's the foundation for everything.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: Foundational and it's right there.

Dr. James Dobson: You can't know the will of God without honoring His son.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: There would be secularists out there who would be very uncomfortable with that because they can't stand exclusivity, but Jesus Himself says this. You and I came to a point, and we're not the dumbest people, we may not be the sharpest knives in the drawer but we are not totally dumb, we came to a point where we said I trust Christ, I believe in Him. If anybody's the perfect gentleman, it was Jesus of Nazareth. He has influenced the world second to none, and he said, "This is the will of my father, that you behold me and believe in me. Trust me."

As I referenced her earlier, my mom and dad had problems in their marriage. I came to Christ because I was sent to military school at age 16 and I asked Jesus Christ to come into me to forgive me at a Billy Graham film called *For Pete's Sake*, and something happened.

Dr. James Dobson: There He is again.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: I know.

Dr. James Dobson: He shows up everywhere.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: Everywhere. Something happened to me, Doc, and my mom, dad, sister, and brother-in-law all were watching me, none of them were believers. I went to Wheaton. I was headed to West Point, that's where I was wanting to go, but I found out Billy went to Wheaton. I didn't know anything, so I applied to Wheaton because I thought Billy and I were the only two that knew what was

going on. I really did, it was immaturity of my part. I applied to Wheaton and my mom, my dad, my sister and brother-in-law, who was a professor, all came to Christ my freshman year.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh my.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: My mother came to me with an open Bible at age 53, tears rolling down her cheeks, and she said, "All my life it was right here, of placing my faith in Jesus and having a personal relationship with Him." That is one of God's universal wills, believe in Jesus Christ. It applies to all Christians through all generations, right? But what we are all hungry for is the unique will of God for our life. I make this point, when we follow the universal will of God, it triggers our experience of the unique will of God.

Dr. James Dobson: The two dimensions to it right there.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: Huge, huge.

Dr. James Dobson: All right, put it into words. What's the difference between universal and unique.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: The universal would be these declarations in Scripture that we've been talking about. God said, "This is my will," so we tend to say that's his universal will. There isn't anybody that there's a footnote in the Greek that says, "Dr. Dobson is an exception. He doesn't have to believe in Jesus Christ." In the Greek text, that's not going to be. Everyone is called to believe. Jesus is expecting universally that everyone's going to follow that will, that's a universal will. It's global, all time for everyone.

If you come to that point where you're struggling, but you say, "Christ, I'm going to trust you in the midst of this situation. I don't know if I should go through door A or door B," well, it may be that you're at a point of difficulty because He wants you to revisit, are you trusting Him? Have you even come to Christ yet? Are you getting ahead of yourself on this? I know that was the case, my dad lost his job. When he lost his job, he didn't know what he was going to do, but during that time his heart was tender and he discovered that God had orchestrated that so that he would discover this personal relationship with Christ. My dad used to get teary eyed, realizing that God had orchestrated that moment of frustration to bring him to the love of Christ.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, apply it to yourself. You were not raised in a Christian home, you were not taught early on about the fundamentals of the faith, and yet, the Lord found you. He was really looking for you, wasn't He? He was calling you when you didn't even hear it.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: Powerful, powerful moment, exactly. But to your point, Jesus Christ came into me and something happened. I remember, it was at Liberty Theater in Mexico, Missouri, Missouri Military Academy, walking back to that campus that I began

to experience the unique presence and peace of Christ in my life that I didn't even know that I didn't have.

The people who are listening right now, if you align yourself with the universal will of God, believing in Jesus Christ and opening your heart, asking Him to forgive you, He went to the cross for you, He died for you, it isn't about you being good enough, He's the one that died in your place, and that's what I heard that day, that I could be forgiven of everything I had done wrong. I placed my faith in Jesus Christ and subsequent to that, all these things began to happen in my life. These unique things that you could chalk up to coincidence, but as my good friend, Sam Erickson, Harvard law graduate, said, "coincidence after coincidence, after coincidence is no longer a coincidence. Furthermore, it is my incident with God's incident, it is a co-incident."

Dr. James Dobson: You know, you are a living example of the foolishness of the notion taught by early psychologists that an individual is a sum total of his experiences, that you are what you have been taught and there is no free will and there is no opportunity to choose, if you're raised in a particular faith or a particular point of view, that's what you inevitably will become. You made an independent decision in your teen years to say, "That's something wrong with that. There's more here than this." It was this voice of God that was calling you. That blesses me, you know that?

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: Well, it was a huge thing. I add to that, if you take that position, then what do you say to the woman who's been sexually abused for years? Is she a hopeless, helpless victim that's damned forever because she has no way of getting out of that? That is a very, very, very dark position to take. I believe that even though we can be deeply wounded and hurt and we can be damaged, we're not destroyed in the freedom that we have, to your point. I came out of some miserable stuff and that did not mean that now I was destined to be an unhappy soul. That when I heard that God could forgive me, that I could ask Christ to come into me, that I could experience his peace, wow, I invite everybody to consider it.

Dr. James Dobson: The title of the book is *The 4 Wills of God: The Way He Directs Our Steps and Frees Us to Direct Our Own*, Dr. Emerson Eggerichs. Boy, this clock is moving fast and we've only dealt with one of the four wills of God. Let's talk about the second one, we're not going to get all through. Some people are going to have to buy the book and you wouldn't mind if they did that.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: No, in fact, I would love for people to give it to a grandson or a daughter or those of you who have lived this way, you know this. This book is designed to help individuals. The idea is this, that when we do these four universal wills of God it triggers or activates the unique will of God, but when it doesn't and you still don't know if I should go through door A or door B, I make this point, that if I am trusting Christ, for instance, and another one is 1 Thessalonians 4:3, this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality. In other words, if I walk-

Dr. James Dobson: That's number four, isn't it?

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: Well, BAGS, B-A-G-S, is an acronym that I put together. Believe in Jesus Christ, abstain from sexual sin, give thanks in everything, 1 Thessalonians 5:18, and submit in doing what's right, 1 Peter 2:13-15. That when I am believing in Christ, when I'm abstaining from sexual sin, when I'm giving thanks in everything, and when I'm submitting and doing what's right when I can do what's wrong and get away with it, when I follow those four, I believe God begins to respond to that individual. I believe with all my heart, Doc, that you've lived by those four, whether you are conscious of it or not, and God has looked at you, so that when 1 John 3:22 says, "Beloved if our heart does not condemn us," we have confidence before God that in whatever we ask of Him, we receive because we keep His commandments, starting with those four wills and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

Here's what I've recognized. Every person I've seen that God has used greatly has been keeping His commandments. Whether they were conscious of these four or not, they had aligned their heart, there was no way they were going to step outside of those. We look at Billy Graham's life. We know that man lived for Christ, he lived in humility, and we believe God's hand was on him because of that. There is a price to pay, but I say to people, the price is so little. If you follow these four and you decide on your watch this is how I'm going to live, I believe God will respond to you.

But if He doesn't respond to you, here's what's so beautiful, you can go through door A or door B, that's really secondary, as long as you continue to do these four, you're doing His will. You're continuing to actively trust, you're continually walking in moral purity, and Jesus said the pure shall see God, that you're giving thanks for things in spite of your understanding and you continue to do what's right, regardless, you continue to do that way and you can go through door A or door B. Relax, just relax. You're not going to miss His will when you're doing his will.

Dr. James Dobson: Boy, that is good stuff. I read just this morning, when I first got up, that more than 80% of today's young people are involved sexually in what the Bible would identify as willful, on purpose, deliberate sin, living outside the will of God. It's very difficult to please God when you're doing that. In fact, I would say it's impossible. He will not tolerate it. He will prick your conscience and make you uncomfortable until you deal with this. But everything else in terms of the will of God occurs and flows out of that obedience, doesn't it?

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: Mm-hmm. Hugely so. I address at length what we're up against with the millennials and what they are hearing as the culture. Our appeal always is that each of us has to come to a point where do we really believe God is there and Christ is His son and has God really spoken, and is He a cosmic killjoy to ruin our party or does He really love us? I believe there are enough Christ followers among the millennials that they know this. I spoke to 150 of them and I said, I kind of joked, I said, "When I get to the section in the chapter on sex, the

publishers said, 'Well, your book sales are going to be killed because the millennials are not going to believe this.'" My position is I don't adhere to that. I believe that they've been influenced, I believe they think that they've got to live together, for instance, in order to learn how the other person is, but for those who love Jesus Christ, you and I would both say to them, the Lord is not going to ultimately honor your life.

Hebrew says, "Adulterers and fornicators the Lord will discipline." The Lord disciplines because He loves us, Hebrews 12 is talking about that. I appeal to that person out there who knows that Christ has changed them, He's come into them, He's forgiven them, but they've moved into this particular arena and they know in their conscience, as you're saying, that it's not right. The question is, do they have the courage to follow Christ or are they going to give in to of their culture and miss out on what God has for them?

Dr. James Dobson: We're almost out of time. Many of the churches today begin with pray songs. Some of those pray songs have great substance to them, many of them don't. Many of them have no theology, no specific understanding of Scripture and often no poetry and no expression of the gospel. Let me remind you of a little pray song that I wonder if you remember. I'm not going to sing it because I have enough trouble talking, but it says, "Trust and obey, for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey." That's really what you're talking. You were mouthing those words as I spoke them.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: Just sang it on Sunday at a traditional service down in Macon, Georgia, "Trust and obey, there's no other way." That's really the choice that you had to come to, Billy Graham had to come to. Every person who's ever been a Christ follower has had to take a position on this. Is that because God is somehow trying to make us unhappy, or does He know something and He's calling us to trust Him? At the deepest recesses of each heart, you and I, I suppose would be Christian hedonists. We want to be happy, we don't want to be sad. I document all the sadness to the hookup generation. It's not working, so pragmatically, it's not working.

Dr. James Dobson: No, it's terrible. It leads to death really, one form or another. The last one we have time to talk about is giving thanks. Now, your wife, Sarah, had bilateral mastectomy many years ago and she began giving God thanks. How in the world did she do that?

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: Well, she would say she was giving thanks before then and that she continued to give thanks through that, but we always point out that not only is she a great model and has impacted our family tremendously, but you don't give thanks for evil, you don't give thanks for the cancer, you don't thanks that you're going to die, but there is this text that most of us know, Romans 8:28, that "God is working all things together for good to those who love him and are called according to His purpose." There's this sense that I trust God, I trust Christ. She was giving thanks, "Lord, I don't know how you're going to use my cancer, I don't know how you're going to use this double mastectomy, I don't know if I'm

going to die in five years, but I thank you that you're going to use this. I thank you because I love you. I thank you because I trust you."

This, I believe, is a crisis of faith for someone who may be listening because circumstances haven't turned out and there's a tendency, either we're going to be like Job or Job's wife. Job's wife said, "Curse God and die," and I think because she was cursing God and wanted to die, she'd lost her family. Our empathy goes to her, but Job made a decision not to sin and he made a decision to trust God and to praise God. God gives, God takes away blessed be the name of the Lord, that he was-

Dr. James Dobson: "Even if you slay me, yet will I trust Him." What a great man.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: It's unbelievable.

Dr. James Dobson: He lost everything.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: That's right. It would be natural to say, well, why would you give God thanks when God could have prevented it? This is a stumbling block. Intellectuals say there are three scenarios, God is all loving, God is all powerful, and there's evil in the world. We know there's evil in the world, but Jesus Christ is on the cross and He believed God was all loving and all powerful. The reality of evil was there. He didn't see the inconsistencies of those three, they all lived together. As believers, we've got to come to a point where we will ask why. Jesus on the cross said, "My God, my God, why?" That is okay, it's not un-Christlike to ask why, but eventually each of us has to come to a point where we will make a decision to trust Him. I will thank you, I will praise you, I will give thanks to you. I will trust you on the basis of what I do understand about you in the face of the unanswered question. I will not choose to distrust what I understand about you in the face of the unanswered question.

Each of us comes to that crossroads where we have to make a decision, am I going to be like Job or am I going to be like Job's wife? This is not superficial stuff, some who are listening are in deep pain right now, but Sarah was on death's door. I've got a woman who's a good friend who is in satanic sexual abuse for years, the evil that came to her. She came to me for counsel and I just said, "Hey, in the midst of all this pain, have you ever given thanks, not for this, but in spite of this?" Well, she got up and walked out, but she went back and she began to give thanks to God and even said, "God, help me give thanks to give thanks," and something began to happen. I quote her in this book about how God began to uniquely respond.

Again, do the universal will of God, and I tell story after story, and then God begins to uniquely respond. My heart goes out to that person who's stuck here, give God an opportunity to respond to you, but you have to move first. You have to make a decision that I'm going to trust this universal will, I'm going to follow this, I'm going to act on this even though I can't comprehend why I

should or how I fully should do this, but in my childlike way, I'm going to do this. I just say God isn't asking for a whole lot, He's very gracious, He's very loving. Just move in that direction and watch what begins to happen.

Dr. James Dobson: Dr. Eggerichs, let's end this conversation with another Scripture. You base everything you do on Scripture, don't you?

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: I try to.

Dr. James Dobson: That's the reference for everything you about, everything I've seen that you've done. But Psalms 100:4 says, "Enter His gates with thanksgiving and enter his courts with praise. Be thankful unto Him and bless His name." That's pretty straightforward.

We're out of time, sir. Thank you for being our guest for two days.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: Thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: It's been a pleasure talking to you again. We've worked together for, has it been 20 years?

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: 2003, yes, yes.

Roger Marsh: Well, what incredible insightful conversations over the past two days here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I hope that you've learned a great deal from Dr. Dobson's interview with Dr. Emerson Eggerichs. You can learn more about Dr. Eggerichs' ministry and marriage conferences by visiting drjamesdobson.org/broadcast.

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Thanks again for listening to Family Talk today. I'm Roger Marsh, and we have another encouraging program for you next time here on the broadcast so make sure you tune in for that. In the meantime, may God continue to richly bless you and your family.

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