



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** So Long, Normal – Part 1

**Guest(s):** Laura Story

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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:** Proverbs 16:9 says, "In their hearts, humans plan their course but the Lord establishes their steps." Hi, I'm Roger Marsh and you're listening to Family Talk. Have you ever been through the experience of having your best laid plans thrown out the window due to unexpected circumstances? I know I have. There's wisdom in making plans and having goals to be sure but as followers of Jesus Christ, our lives are part of God's bigger story and sometimes we don't understand all of his plans for us. Well, our guest today here on Family Talk knows all about having your best laid plans completely change. Her name is Laura Story. And as you'll hear over the next two days, she and her family have been on a journey that is anything but quote unquote, "normal." Laura is a Bible teacher, worship leader and Grammy award winning singer songwriter. She serves as a worship leader at Perimeter Church in Atlanta, Georgia and travels the nation, encouraging women and families with her own family's story.

Laura brings a message that suffering is a part of the normal Christian life and that God uses it to build character and hope in His children. Laura is wife to Martin and mom to four children. She's also a fun loving, articulate, energetic lady and we are so thrilled to have her on Family Talk today. The conversation you're about to hear was recorded backstage at a recent Extraordinary Women event. Let's join our co-host, Dr. Tim Clinton right now and his guest Laura Story, to begin today's edition of Family Talk.

**Dr. Tim Clinton:** In the shifting, changing and ever insanity of everything that's familiar in life, you don't have to wring your hands in fear. You can push past the loss of your normal and step into a new story that God is writing for you. And He is doing that. Welcome in to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host here at Family Talk and I also serve as president of the American Association of Christian Counselors. I'm a licensed professional counselor, marriage and family therapist, honored to serve alongside the team here at JDFI. Thanks for spending your day with us.

Well, I'm currently in Pensacola, Florida at an Extraordinary Women conference. Just a few hundred feet away from where we are right now, there's a sold out event, packed full of energetic women, all walks of life, Christian denominations worshipping God, being encouraged by great Godly women, speakers. Yes, we're at the Marcus Pointe Baptist Church and I have now with me, one of the special speakers from our weekend, it's Laura Story. Laura's a Bible teacher, worship leader, Grammy award winning singer/songwriter, best-selling author. You know her from her music, especially the song "Blessings," which was certified gold. I think that means over 500,000 copies were sold in 2011.

Laura's music, her writing, show God's love and grace intersecting with real life and that despite of our questions or tough circumstances, He's the ultimate author of our story. In 2021, Laura published her most recent book. It's entitled *So Long, Normal: Living and Loving the Free Fall of Faith*. That book is going to be the focus of our conversation today. Laura has a graduate degree from Covenant Theological Seminary, has served as a worship leader at Perimeter Church in Atlanta since 2005. Her greatest joy is being a wife to Martin and the mother to Josie, Ben, Griffin and I like this name, Timothy. I don't know where you're at or what you're going through right now but I know this, God does and I'm going to encourage you to do something. Turn that radio up. You don't want to miss this broadcast. Laura, welcome to Family Talk.

Laura Story: Thank you. What a privilege to get to be on your show today.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You and I were talking off mic a little bit and I know you got a special story about Dr. Dobson.

Laura Story: Well, and it actually has to do with Timothy. My husband and I, and I'm sure we'll get into this as we talk, our story has been different than what we expected. And there were some parts of our story that we thought for a while was going to kind of prohibit us from having children. But God's plans are always greater and more wonderful than ours and we ended up having a daughter and then we had twin boys and then we were praying about having one more. And my husband said, "No way, Jose." And I said, "I don't know, Martin. It just feels like we should." And so we took a weekend that both of us were going to pray about it. And I really was kind of back and forth. Anyway, I was traveling that weekend and I usually have a kid with me in tow when I travel, as I do today.

But that weekend it was just me and so had a lot of time to pray and think and I was leading music for a dinner. I don't even remember where I was but I'm sitting at the table of kind of guests that were helping with the event. And lo and behold, I am sitting next to Dr. James Dobson. And I look at the little place card and I thought, okay Lord, if I ever wanted a chance to, first, I'd never met him before but I thought "isn't this God's sense of humor that I'm trying to make this enormous decision in the life of our family and I'm sitting next to the man who is maybe one of the most notable for family counsel."

And so, I just said, "Dr. Dobson, we just need to get right to the point. My name's Laura and we need to get right to the point here. My husband and I praying through this." And he said, "If you and your husband feel that tug in your heart, children are a blessing from the Lord." And I went home and I was ready to surrender and submit there. And I walk in the door and Martin said, "I really feel like I've heard from the Lord that we should have another child." And I said, "Well, I heard from James Dobson that we should. Between God and Dr. Dobson, we probably should do it."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Thus Timothy.

Laura Story: Thus Timothy.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And what I love about the name Timothy is it means honoring God. It's a beautiful name. Laura, let's go way back. Want to introduce you in a special way to our listeners. Little girls have dreams, Cinderella dreams and more, what was it like for you growing up South Carolina, right?

Laura Story: I had a fairly uneventful childhood in the most wonderful way possible. I have older sister, younger brother. We were raised in Spartanburg, South Carolina. My dad was a physician there and served just such an honorable, hardworking man and my mom led Bible studies there. It was really a wonderful childhood. I was involved in orchestra. I went on to college and studied string bass. And then once the Lord just began to direct my life towards ministry, transferred to a Bible college in Columbia, South Carolina and graduated from there. And after about a year, got reconnected to my high school sweetheart named Martin, who I'm married to now. And then we ended up landing about a year after we got married, landed at Perimeter Church, which is where I've been serving for the past almost 17 years.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Kind of one of those special, I mean that in the best way, normal everyday lives. And there's something about normal that just gets wired deep inside of us, isn't it? That there's something beautiful, predictable and if you like control it's really good. Laura, but as stories unfold, we know they take a lot of twist and turns and yours did. If you don't mind just sharing a little bit about what happened.

Laura Story: Oh, not at all. Not at all. We had been married for about a year when we began to notice Martin having some memory issues and even some just energy level issues. He had been an athlete in high school and college and so for him to be just getting tired all the time and having trouble getting motivated about things, it just, we knew it really wasn't normal for him. And after years of having some testing, Martin was diagnosed with a brain tumor. And so we began the process of figuring out, okay, so what do we need to do? Had surgery and probably about a month and a half after finding out the initial news and then he was in the hospital for about three months after the surgery. He had some complications, the surgery ended up being more serious than what they had initially thought.

Martin was finally discharged from the hospital three months later but where we had kind of assumed, okay, they're going to remove the tumor. We're going to get back to life as normal. We found ourselves in a very anything but normal situation where Martin had all of these lingering effects from the tumor, from the surgery, from complications. And so we began the journey that now we kind of refer to as Martin's brain injury. And so we've been living with these limitations with his vision, limitations with his memory and really a handful of other issues that have resulted from the brain injury. And we're learning, we limp along and we thrive and we're learning that you can somehow limp and thrive all at once. But yeah, it's definitely been an interesting journey.

Dr. Tim Clinton: My sister Candice, my younger kid sister Candy was involved in a car accident when we were, I was 16, she was 14 years old. And in that she suffered a TBI, traumatic brain injury and she was comatose for 28 days.

Laura Story: Wow.

Dr. Tim Clinton: In the hospital and through that, my eyes were open. I became basically a parent in a lot of ways. I helped take care of her but I remember so much changed. She was able to come out of it and began to heal but had a lot of scar tissue and things like that for her. She became a controlled epileptic, et cetera. But there were changes, Laura, a lot of changes, personality changes, things like that. And she had to relearn life all over again. Laura, for you guys, what changed? What was probably the most difficult part of the journey?

Laura Story: Well, it's interesting. You even say what changed? We had been married less than two years when it happened. It's hard for me to even think about the fact that most of our married life has been with Martin with a brain injury. But what changed? Man, everything changed. Everything from just his limitations now, we take longer. Basic things he takes longer to do. With a memory deficit, it makes friendships complicated. It's because of his vision deficit he's unable to drive. Because of just overall body fatigue, he's unable to work full time. For him and I don't want to tell.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Very frustrating for him.

Laura Story: Oh yes. And very much I think, especially for men finding so much identity in work, finding so much identity in independence, in an ability to provide for your family, for your wife. At the time, it was just providing for me. And for me, where I had grown up again in a wonderful home but my dad was the breadwinner. My mom stayed at home with the kids and it was hard for me to visualize what family could look like with me being a working mom. And so I feel like every paradigm we had of what marriage and family was supposed to look like had been shattered by his brain injury.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Laura, in the midst of all of it, you no doubt wrestled with God. I'm thinking about Dr. Dobson's book, *When God Doesn't Make Sense*. There are a lot of

times in life when we get to that point where we stare at the wall, we wonder about His goodness and grace and somewhere, God did something down inside of your heart because you gave a gift or I'll say, God gave a gift to us through you in a song called "Blessings." Tell us a little bit how all that tied together.

Laura Story:

The song "Blessings," it was, I remember exactly where I was and I was driving through Birmingham, Alabama and I think I was on I-20. I just remember being on a big interstate and we were, my husband and I at that point, we had began to be asked by churches and different groups to come and for me to play songs and share our story. Back when I made reference to me feeling called to ministry and going to Bible college, anyone that prepares for ministry, they think that ministry will look a certain way. They have some sort of paradigm. And for us, we were being introduced to this idea that ministry isn't so much this thing that you join in on or go out and do based on what you know from the Bible, as much as it is offering your life and stewarding well what God is calling you to walk through.

What we were doing at the time was just this weird version of ministry where it wasn't that we had surrendered our problems to God, He had fixed them and now we were going around telling the world about it. We were very much limping through it. And at the same time, God was asking us to go to different places and share about this. As I was in my car that day, it was probably around 11:00 o'clock at night. With Martin being unable to drive, he was taking a nap in the seat next to me and it was just that quiet moment of reflecting on "this looks so different than what I expected. This looks so different than anything I dreamed of as a kid or even as a newlywed" but God has shown up in our story, in our marriage, in our future plans in a way that I never imagined. In a way where I've seen His faithfulness, where I've seen His provision possibly in a greater way, in a more extraordinary way than I would have if He had left us in that ordinary life that I really was wanting.

And so that's where as I began to, and still be very honest about the doubts and fears that I had. That's when I began to write the song "Blessings," even just sitting in the car and we finally got to the hotel and I jotted more of the ideas down on a napkin or a bank receipt, whatever I found in the car right there. And so, before it was, and it's so humbling for you to say that it was a blessing to you or to the church as a whole, it began just as a means for me to process how God truly does do incredible things when we surrender our brokenness to Him.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

Laura, I taught on suffering, help people through anger, confusion, times of loss in life and I think we all get at some point to a place where it's like Job. You just sit back and wonder about it all. And there's something about all of this coming together into one place. And then somebody has a gift and puts it to music, a song and those songs, you never know where you're at or where you're going through, something triggers inside of you. And God uses it in a special way. I want to go to that right now. I don't know where you're at, what you're doing right now but I know God does and I hope you appreciate a little bit of the song "Blessings."

Laura Story: (singing) "What if your blessings come through raindrops? What if your healing comes through tears? And what if a thousand sleepless nights are what it takes to know you're near? What if trials in this life, are Your mercies in disguise?"

Dr. Tim Clinton: You're listening to Family Talk, a division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host here. So delighted that you've joined us for this addition of Family Talk. Our special in studio guest is Laura Story and we're talking about her life journey, what God's been doing in and through her. That song, "Blessings" is one of those songs, Laura, that just again, does something deep down in your soul, it kind of reframes life, doesn't it?

Laura Story: Well, I'd say it wasn't one of those songs where, and I don't know how it is for other songwriters. I'm sure there are people out there that study something from God's Word and then they have mastered enough to put it in song form to bless everyone else with it. But for me, I wrote it just with these ideas that I was grappling with. It was so raw and it was the truths and the promises of God that He knew that I needed to be singing night after night. That song, I can't tell you how big a part it played in my own healing.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Laura, earlier in the broadcast you had mentioned about, you're going to share a little story with us about your husband and the kids.

Laura Story: Well, honestly it's not even so much a story as probably the biggest thing that we've learned over the past couple years. It took a lot of faith for us to have children, even with my husband having a disability. I think at first, both of us thought that that just wasn't in the cards for us. But God had not taken that desire away and so we began to pray about what might this look like for us to start a family. And clearly once we started, we had four. But here's the neatest thing that the Lord has shown us over the past few years. I think we anticipated that Martin's disability would be the hardest thing about being parents and it has been but we almost viewed it in a way that his disability would kind of be a detriment to our children. But what we've seen is the exact opposite.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Wow.

Laura Story: What we've seen is that God has used the brokenness of Martin's disability to create in our kids just this character. He has done this work in the lives of our kids, not through the great things we've done as parents but through our endurance in the hardest parts, the hardest aspects of us parenting, which is Martin's disability. And it always makes me think of Romans 5, where Paul calls us to rejoice in our suffering because it's suffering that produces character, suffering that produces endurance, suffering that produces hope. And it's so beautiful to see that in the lives of our kids. I wish we could just send them to Vacation Bible School to learn things like character and endurance and not that scripture memory and all those things don't play a role in it but it is through the suffering that we as parents are so quick to want to protect our children from suffering. We're so quick to want to.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We think they're immune to it. You know what I mean? If we don't talk about things nothing could be further from the truth. They're living in it.

Laura Story: We want to solve the suffering that our kids are going through rather than there's some suffering that we need to allow them to feel because that is the way the Scriptures tell us that Godly character really is built in with our kids.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Laura, we're fighting the clock. It's unbelievable how fast time is going.

Laura Story: That's my fault.

Dr. Tim Clinton: But hey, I'm so excited. What a delightful conversation, tough conversation but hope you'll come back and join us again on the broadcast tomorrow.

Laura Story: I would love that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And continue this conversation about, hey, your new book, especially, *So Long Normal: Living and Loving the Free Fall of Faith*. On behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife Shirley, the entire team at Family Talk, we're just so honored that you joined us and pray that God will continue to use you, your ministry and bless your family. Thank you for joining us.

Laura Story: Thanks so much. What a privilege to be here and thanks for having me back tomorrow.

Roger Marsh: Wow. Such a vulnerable and heart wrenching story from our guest on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. You just heard the first half of Dr. Tim Clinton's recent conversation with worship leader and award winning recording artist Laura Story. And as a result of Laura's husband's brain injury, the Story family led a life that is anything but quote unquote normal. But in the midst of all the unknowns though, Laura has found peace by embracing the fact that God is faithful, regardless of the circumstances. Ultimately though, when you are around Laura Story, whether it's at her church where she is a worship leader or when she's speaking at a conference or maybe just listening to one of her songs on the radio, the feeling you get from Laura Story is one of triumph and victory. That is the victory that we can only experience in Jesus Christ.

Well then here at Family Talk, we understand that trusting God in the hard times is often easier said than done. On tomorrow's edition of Family Talk, Laura will be sharing more of her journey of coming to a place of peace and rest and faith and we think that you'll find it very encouraging. In the meantime, if you missed any of today's program, remember you can listen to it in its entirety at [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). That's [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). And while you're there, you can also learn more about Laura Story, her music and her books.

Now I hope your summer is off to a great start. As you spend time with your family, please take a moment to pray for those who are struggling. Many are suffering through divorce, loss of loved ones, health challenges, and other trials. Here at the JDFI, we hear from people on a daily basis asking for help and thanks to your support, we are able to minister to them in very tangible ways. In fact, maybe you've been one of those people who've called in with a prayer request. Well, this month we have a special opportunity to double our reach to even more people with the hope of the gospel and that's because of the generosity of some very special friends or the ministry.

They have provided a matching grant for us of \$300,000. That means when you make a donation to the Dobson Family Institute or Family Talk this month, that gift will be doubled. Your financial support enables us to help couples grow closer and enjoy deeper intimacy than they've ever experienced. We also are encouraging and equipping parents so they can be engaged in the lives of their children to help them grow into Godly adults. Now, this matching gift will last only through the end of the month of June. So please consider helping us right now. You can give a gift online at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) or call us at (877) 732-6825. I'm Roger Marsh. Join us again tomorrow to hear the conclusion of Laura Story's encouraging conversation with Dr. Tim Clinton. That's coming your way on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hey, everyone. Did you know that radio is more popular now than ever? A new feature here at Family Talk we're excited to announce. It's called the Station Finder Feature. This is Dr. Tim Clinton for Family Talk. I'm going to tell you how you can listen to our daily broadcast on a station near you.

Go to the broadcast menu at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org), then click on the Family Talk radio stations button. Once you're there, you're going to see an interactive map of radio affiliates, which by the way is growing every day. Simply click on your home state and then you'll see where our broadcast is airing in your town. Stop randomly spinning around the dial, hoping to find Dr. Dobson and Family Talk. Go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) and take advantage of this brand station finder feature.