



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Dr. Dobson: The Man Behind the Mic – Part 2

Guest(s): Chris Fabry

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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: Well welcome to another edition of Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, your host for this very special edition of Family Talk as we continue our celebration of the life and legacy of our founder. Dr. James C. Dobson, one of the most influential Christian leaders of the last half century and a tireless advocate for the traditional family, passed away early Thursday morning, August 21st. He has survived by his wife of 64 years, Shirley, and their children, Danae and Ryan, along with their daughter-in-law Laura and two beloved grandchildren. In fact, tomorrow would've been the Dobson's 65th wedding anniversary. In sensitive times like these, when the emotions are a bit raw, sometimes it's helpful to sit and reflect on the legacy that sustains us. I'm sure that this recent recording that Dr. Dobson had with his good friend, Chris Fabry, will certainly speak to you. It's a sentimental conversation that we began on yesterday's broadcast. Chris, of course, is the host of the nationally syndicated radio program, Chris Fabry Live. So let's listen in now as Chris begins the special edition of Family Talk.

Chris Fabry: What a pleasure to have Dr. James Dobson with us today, we're finding out a little bit more about what goes on behind the scenes. We were just talking about laughter and tears. I really think that what people are looking for, and this can happen with radio because it's only the voice, but if you've just got your voice and you're talking with somebody else, radio is so personal, a medium. That's why it can go so deeply, and I've heard you probably have gotten letters like this or emails of people who are saying, "I was driving down the road. I was in my pickup truck and I heard this or that conversation with that person and I had to pull over because I was so gripped by it." You love those kinds of responses, don't you?

Dr. James Dobson: I do. I'm thinking of one woman who was working at a large company. Whatever we were talking about, had really gripped her and she got to work and she was overdue. She was late and she would not get out of the car until she was through listening to us on Focus on the Family, and finally we finished and she popped out of the car and all over the parking lot, people were popping out of their cars because they were also captivated by what was being said there. And so it is the essence of what radio is supposed to be and it's why I love it. I love it.

I like television, but it's a whole lot of follow all. I get bored with that. I love radio because it is so personal. Television is a performance. It's eight minutes and we'll be right back. Radio is more of a personal kind of thing. I meet people on the street that I've never met and they know my dog, they know my kids, they know my wife, they know what I did last summer. It is far more of a relationship and whereas television is a performance.

Chris Fabry: They remember when you fell off the horse, right?

Dr. James Dobson: I hope nobody else does, but I do.

Chris Fabry: I have so many questions that I want you to answer and here's one I want you to talk about your age. You're 81 now, but you're born in '36. Everybody knows this. You have been on a treadmill every day and I mean a literal treadmill, you do this every day, right?

Dr. James Dobson: Yes. In the beginning, after I'd had a heart attack, I decided to do that every single day and I've done it now, this is the 24th year that I've done it. I exercised before that. In fact, I was playing basketball when I had the heart attack, so I've always loved to exercise and loved competition and I played tennis before that. My dad started teaching me to play tennis when I was eight years old, and so that has always been part of my life. But when I had the heart attack, a doctor came in about midnight and we talked about what had happened to me and he told me that it would really help me if I really got into a daily exercise routine and I decided, well, if that's what it takes to stay alive, I will. And so I've exercised 45 minutes a day almost every day from that time to this, and my cardiologist told me the other day, he had just done an exam on me and my heart was functioning like that of a younger man that hadn't had a heart attack and he said, I know that you give the Lord a lot of credit for your being alive, and I agree with that, but I can tell you you've earned a lot of it by exercise and I've just stayed with that and my heart is still functioning like that of a younger man and I'm grateful for it.

Chris Fabry: Yeah. Who do you miss the most of all the voices that are out there that have been silenced Now as far as their, no, we can't ask Chuck Colson a question about this, that or the other thing. Who do you miss the most?

Dr. James Dobson: Well, he's one of 'em. He and I would talk every two or three weeks about what was happening in the country and the election and other things, deeply spiritual things as well, and I just loved that man. Another one's Adrian Rogers. Both those guys were like brothers to me. I said at the top of the program that I feel like you're a brother to me, but those two guys had a great impact. Adrian Rogers was on our board of directors and it was absolutely amazing. He joined the board there and instantly changed the nature of the whole board. I don't mean that they changed their spiritual views or what have you, but they just loved each other in a different way and he made a great contribution on my life. I do miss both those guys.

Chris Fabry: You know what those two that you mentioned, the common denominator that they shared was they had great voices too. They had this presence, they had this prophetic kind of ministry in the culture as well as in the church, but they'd also been through an awful lot of pain. Adrian Rogers and his wife lost a baby early on, and I think it was that event and the little Philip, I think it was losing him that really caused him to have this tenderness in the pulpit. Although he could be very strong, Southern Baptist Convention, and Chuck Colson as well, you can't get any stronger than the Marine and how tough he was and yet there was this tenderness to him. Do you agree that pain in the life of a leader can take them to a different well, in a sense than...

Dr. James Dobson: There's no doubt about that, Chris. Those two guys along with my dad were three that had a great impact on me, and Chuck wasn't afraid to tell me that he thought I was wrong, and Adrian, he and I had some wonderful talks together. I feel for men especially who don't have anybody in their life like that, who will love them, who will tell them that they're a little bit off track, but also will tell you when you're doing things right. I had a lot of those guys in my life.

Chris Fabry: Let me ask a question about the transition, and I don't want to ask this because I want you to tell us something that you've never told anybody before, but as I recall, one the things you think of Bill Bright, Campus Crusade or CRU and other organizations that faced a really difficult time transitioning to the next phase. Your belief with Focus on the Family was you really wanted, you set in place the transition early on because you really wanted that to go well, and in some ways it went smoothly and in other ways I sense there is still a little regret with how all of that went. It could have "gone better." How do you look at that today as you look back at going from Focus to Family Talk?

Dr. James Dobson: Well, Chris, other than the loss of my dad, that was the most painful thing in my life because I had for more than 10 years prepared for a smooth transition. I knew a time would come when it was time to go, and I wanted to recognize that when that time came. We did a lot of talking about it, we had a big manual that we had worked out and I thought I was very much in harmony with the board in anticipation of that, and I had told the board that I thought it was time for me to go, but I wasn't ready yet and that I told them that it would be maybe six months. Shirley and I were approaching our 50th wedding anniversary and I thought that would be a good time, but I said, I just don't feel that the Lord has said now and yet I was approaching it rationally and I think properly, and I got invited to come down to Georgia for a board meeting.

I said, is there a reason why? And I was not given one. I was just told, "Well, there's some transition issues that we need to talk about." Shirley and I went into our hotel room and we prayed and we said, "Lord, we want to do things right and if this is the time for us to leave, we would try to be compliant with it." And we walked in and we're blindsided. We were told "you need to be gone by the next board meeting." And that was one of the most painful things I've ever been through because it is blindsided. I was being heard by 220 million people every day in 150 countries. Our budget was \$146 million a year. I had had no

great conflict. It just all of a sudden the board said, it's time to go. And we cried all the way home and I'm telling you things I've never said publicly before and I'm not mad at anybody. I don't want to try to hurt anybody. I had been there 33 years, that's sort of my baby in a way.

And it just suddenly was done. And I was asked at that board meeting, what are you going to do? And I said, well, radio's my life. I'll probably do more radio. And the next day I started Family Talk. I didn't have anything. I didn't have a building, I didn't have a staff, I didn't have a radio studio. I had very little money. I just went back to where I was in 1977 and started over and I wasn't on anybody's radio station. I just started from scratch. And the reason I did continue is because the Lord had His hand in my back and He said, "Don't even think about retiring. The job is not done. The family is still in great difficulty and there's more that I want you to do." And the Lord has blessed Family Talk. It kind of took off the way Focus on the Family had taken off in 1977. And so I'm enjoying it and I'm doing what I think God called me to do. And so that's where I am. But when I look back on my life, that probably is the most painful experience of all.

Chris Fabry: I think there's a lot of people going to identify with what you just talked about, that experience that you've gone through. I'm going to go back to what you just mentioned though, the pain that you had with Focus on the Family, the transition to Family Talk, and now let's look at it from this perspective because there's somebody listening today who says, "I had that. It wasn't as big, it wasn't as public as what Dr. Dobson just talked about, but I've had that kind of thing happen to me." Personally, relationships or at work or whatever. Now here's the question. How has God then used that pain, that struggle that you went through and has used it both on the air and moving forward with Family Talk, with your ministry?

Dr. James Dobson: Well, anything intense like that, that you experience changes you and use it and the Lord uses it and He's used it in my life and I had the choice of being publicly angry and hurt by that and to be vocal about it. And I chose to take the high road and I think the Lord has blessed that. I think that He has said to me, "I saw it and it's okay." Have you ever had a moment like that when you just think you feel the Lord's smile? And it's not because you're perfect, it's not because you've done some magnificent thing, but it's because you say, "you heard My voice and you did what I wanted you to do, and what is that to thee follow thou me" and I believe that has occurred in my life. I think there's a softening and there's a gentle spirit there that I may not have had throughout my life. I'll have to let somebody else interpret that, but I think that's what my wife Shirley would tell.

Chris Fabry: One of the main reasons people know James Dobson in the broader culture is the interview that you did with Ted Bundy. Take us back to that. What do you remember?

Dr. James Dobson: Well, there's just a world of memories related to that. That was one of the most bizarre things I've ever been through. In fact, I knew it was coming. Ted had a

lawyer friend who was not his lawyer, but he was a friend, and he came down and met with Ted, I think about 200 times, about the Lord, about his life, about the things that he had done, which were reprehensible. They think that he killed probably around a hundred women. And he told a lawyer to call me, and this was two years before and said that once the governor of the state of Florida, Governor Martinez, gave the okay for his execution because he was on death row for a long time that he wanted to talk to me. And the reason Ted wanted to talk to me was because he had been aware of my service on the Attorney General's commission on pornography, and he wanted to know more and wanted to tell his story because he felt that it was pornography that really got him in, got him started in sadomasochism. He found magazines at a dump when he was 13 years old.

And it is one of those experiences where it's progressive and addictive, and that's really what got into him. And he wanted to tell everybody because when I was in the Attorney General's commission, we've ended with a 2000 page report and he read it all and he saw himself in there and he felt an obligation. This may be self-serving on his part, but he felt an obligation to warn parents about pornography and don't let their kids get into it because it never ends. And so after two years, we got the phone call and I went down to Florida State Prison. There were 300 members of the press there with all of the TV equipment and everything and the uplink dishes, and they were waiting for something. They wanted to interview Bundy and he wouldn't talk to them, and I was the only one he would talk to. And when I walked out of that prison, it was 10 o'clock at night, they had strobe lights on and about 50 microphones the way they do in Washington, and it was bizarre, I'm telling you, and it did have a great impact on me, and when it was over, I wept like a baby. I can tell you.

Chris Fabry:

With the remaining moments here, I've got to know, was there ever somebody you wanted to interview that wouldn't come on or didn't? I remember the Pete Maravich, you were playing basketball with him and you're going to record with him, and that didn't get to happen. You had conversations with him at other times, but was there ever a person that you thought, oh, I want to get that person in the studio and talk with him.

Dr. James Dobson:

There are two. Francis Schafer is one of 'em. I really wanted to interview Francis Schafer and he was a hero of mine. We were talking about heroes earlier. Francis Schafer, great philosopher. Boy did he have an influence on me regarding the sanctity of life and on just the understanding of who Christ is and many things. And he was living in Santa Barbara and I was living in Los Angeles, and I was invited to come to Santa Barbara and interview him, and it was a very busy Saturday for me, and I didn't go and he died right after that. I had opportunity to interview one of the great men of our day, and I didn't get it done, and I've always regretted it. Another one is Billy Graham. I invited him several times to come and I don't regret him not going because he had the passion on his life and he had work to do, and he just never found the time to come be on my program or let me come there, but I would love to have

interviewed him. I had such great love and respect for him. I'd like to have told him that. I think he knows it because everybody else has told him that too.

Chris Fabry: Well, I think there are a lot of listeners who if we'd been live today, Doctor would say the same thing to you. Thank you for your input. When I had this toddler who was screaming or going through colic or a teenager didn't know how to love well or the grandchild or all of those different things, the things that you've talked about through the years, they'd say, put an arm around you and say the same thing. Thanks for your faithfulness, for your character, for doing what God has told you to do. For the warmth of your voice on the radio that's still coming through, and I can't thank you enough for. I still have a bushel basket of questions to ask, but we'll have to end it right there. Thanks for doing this today.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's do it again, Chris.

Roger Marsh: Just hearing that sentiment from Dr. Dobson reminds me of an email I received from Chris Fabry a couple of months ago. I'm Roger Marsh, by the way, and you are listening to a special edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Chris reached out to me and asked if Doctor would have some time to join him again on Chris Fabry Live. This was just a couple of months ago, and I knew Doctor 's health was keeping him from keeping the kind of schedule he liked to keep, and so we've been dialoguing back and forth and on the morning of Thursday, August 21st, last Thursday, Chris reached out with another email and said, "Well, I'm sad that we won't be able to do the interview, but I'm happy that Dr has received his ultimate reward in Heaven. Well done, good and faithful servant indeed." Today here on the special edition of Family Talk, we've been hearing this conversation featuring Dr. Dobson and Chris Fabry, the host of Chris Fabry Live. It reflects the wisdom, the personality, and the passion that shaped the media ministry of our beloved leader, Dr. James C. Dobson, who is now home with the Savior he loved and trusted.

This week here on Family Talk, we are setting aside all other programming in order to reflect on the legacy that we enjoy. We remember Dr. Dobson, but we know it's a dynamic legacy that will continue on into the future. By the way, if you missed any of these programs, you'll find the audio recordings online at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And while you're there, be sure to check out the tribute to our founder and the many different other features that will remind you about Dr. Dobson's life and legacy. And please, as God prompts you to give a special gift, follow His lead. With years of planning, the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute is positioned to continue its impact around the world, fueled by the generous support of longtime friends just like you.

Now is the perfect time to express your gratitude for the ministry of Dr. Dobson with a prayer of course, but also with a gift that will catapult his message into the next generation. You can give a secure donation online at drjamesdobson.org, and when you do make a contribution today, we will thank you for that donation by sending you a special commemorative CD put together

just for this occasion. It's a special presentation featuring Dr. And Mrs. Dobson on the occasion of their 65th wedding anniversary, a two-part program called *The Dobsons: A Marriage Made in Heaven*. We'll be happy to send that CD to you as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount. When you go to Dr. JamesDobson.org. You can also call us toll free with your contribution at 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825 or write to us. Our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk P.O. Box 39000 Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code 80949.

When you make a contribution, you're not just supporting a radio program. You're helping dads and moms all over the world find hope during their darkest moments. You're providing parents and grandparents with practical guidance and you're ensuring that God's design for family remains a beacon of truth in our culture. So thanks so much for reaching out.

I'm Roger Marsh, thanking you for listening today. On behalf of all of us here at the JDFI, tune in again next time as we continue the celebration of the life and legacy of the late Dr. James C. Dobson, right here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you can still trust, for the family you love.

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