



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Girls: The Fair Sex – Part 2

**Guest(s):** N/A

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Announcer: Today, on Family Talk:

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome everyone to this edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and today we are concluding a classic broadcast involving Dr. Dobson's book, *Bringing Up Girls*.

Shortly after its release, Dr. Dobson sat behind the mic in our studios here at Family Talk in Colorado Springs, and he shared his thoughts about his newest book, or at least his newest book at that time.

On yesterday's program, he talked about a girl's tender and affectionate side that was uniquely designed by God. In just a moment, Dr. Dobson will delve into the low self-esteem and identity issues that so many women face today.

As was the case yesterday, you're going to hear Family Talk's former co-host, LuAnne Crane, on today's program, as well.

Now there's a lot of ground to cover, so let's get started.

You're listening to Family Talk, a production of The Dobson Family Institute.

LuAnne Crane: Last time, we focused the discussion around a chapter called, "The Fair Sex," which is kind of an interesting title and it really talks about the femininity that God designed for both girls and women. And we're going to continue that discussion today.

And to do that, we're going to go back to another book you wrote, one I remember very well, called, *What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women*, and some references you made in that book that surprisingly also relate to little girls.

Dr. Dobson: Yes, LuAnne, that book was published in the 1970s, it's still out there, amazingly, after all these years.

The basis for the book was a survey that I did with ultimately about 5,000 women on the sources of depression in women. And I listed ten different reasons that women deal more with depression than men. One of them is hormonal, by the way. They're differences between men and women, as we said last time.

But then I rank ordered those sources of depression from one to ten. And the number one source of depression for women, according to this, not scientific survey, it was a poll and a rank ordering, was low self-esteem.

It is amazing. There is this tendency for many women to doubt their value, doubt their worth. It's the downside of the vulnerability that we were talking about last time, with this tenderness and this compassion that is more characteristic of girls than boys. But it also leads to less confidence, typically. Now that's politically incorrect to say, but I'm telling you it is true.

And in this chapter, "The Fair Sex," I gave examples of very competent, accomplished, many of them well-known women who deal with this matter of low self-esteem. It's probably true in the girls, the daughters, of the people who are listening to us today.

But here are some examples of it. Chris Evert, who was the former number one tennis player in the world. She said, "I had no idea who I was or what I could be away from tennis. I was depressed and afraid because so much of my life had been defined by my being a tennis champion. I was completely lost. Winning made me feel like I was somebody. It made me feel pretty. It was like being hooked on a drug. I needed the wins, the applause, in order to have an identity."

Another example of it is Madonna. You know, she has had a lot of success in the entertainment world. I don't approve of everything she does, but it's the same issue. She said, "I have an iron will and all of my will has been devoted to conquering some horrible feelings of inadequacy. I'm always struggling with that fear. I push past one cell of it and discover myself as a special human being of worth. And then I go to another stage and I think I'm mediocre and I'm uninteresting and I'm worthless and I have to find a way to get out of myself again. My drive in life is from this horrible feeling of being inadequate and mediocre, and it's always pushing me. I have to be somebody," she said.

Oprah Winfrey, I mean, probably the most famous entertainment person in the world. Millions of viewers tune in everyday to hear what she has to say. This is what she said, "I discovered I didn't feel worth a d\_, and certainly not worthy of love unless I was accomplishing something. I suddenly realized that I have never felt that I could be loved just for being."

You see a pattern here?

LuAnne Crane: I do.

Dr. Dobson: I mean, I could have put 20 names of famous women here. This is a pattern that you see in women and it's related to the femininity that's there. And it should be possible to be a woman and know who you are. And let your little girls know who they are without falling victim to that sense of self-doubt.

LuAnne Crane: Well, and this sounds like it's a very universal concept. I mean, it's kind of startling for me to hear that these very prestigious and glamorous women struggle with that. Those of us who are more normal think, "Well, of course, we don't think that highly of ourselves and all of these women have it together."

But what you've said is, it's everywhere.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah. Well, it's certainly in many, many women.

Ava Gardner, Marilyn Monroe, I mean, you just look at those who have achieved what they set out to achieve. Many of them feel the same things that are felt by homemakers at home who feel like the world has passed them by. It goes with the temperament, it goes with some vulnerabilities that I think we need to understand in our little girls.

Now let me tell you something, I discovered the same thing about my wife, Shirley. When she was in college, she was Miss Everything. She was homecoming queen, she was the most outstanding junior girl, she was senior class president, she was designated by the faculty among students, they called it Who's Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities. And she was one of the most popular girls in school.

She was beautiful, she had guys pursuing her from the time she arrived as a freshman, and everybody loved Shirley. And so did I. But I discovered during our first year of marriage that she harbored these same secret doubts about herself that she had concealed from me during our three year courtship.

The fact that Shirley disliked herself made absolutely no sense to me. And I loved her and I sat about changing that. And it has happened. She's a very, very confident woman today. You know her.

LuAnne Crane: I do.

Dr. Dobson: Chairman of the National Day of Prayer, and just a marvelous human being. I say that, not because she's my wife, but because she is: she's a great lady.

LuAnne Crane: Well, she has balanced out that vulnerable fair side with the strength that we talked about yesterday.

Dr. Dobson: Yes. Now, in her case, I know it was related to the fact that her father was an alcoholic. And you know, there's some baggage that comes with that. But more than that, it is this characteristic in many women that is a product of the femininity.

Do you understand how a positive can be a negative?

LuAnne Crane: I sure do.

Dr. Dobson: And a negative can be a positive.

LuAnne Crane: Which kind of begs the question, Dr., for all the husbands listening right now, or the fathers, then how do I help them overcome that?

Dr. Dobson: Oh, it's done with closeness and love. It's done by allowing a woman to be a woman and to affirm her for who she is. And it's done through friendship, it's done through romance, it's done through accomplishment, but that's not enough.

Now, I want to read something to you that I didn't write, I wish I had. This is really very good, along this same line. This is a quote from a book by John and Stasi Eldredge. And it's entitled, *Captivating: Unveiling the Mystery of a Woman's Soul*.

And this is what I think Stasi wrote. She said, "You see, every little girl and every little boy is asking one fundamental question, but they're very different questions, depending on whether they are a little boy or a little girl. Little boys want to know, 'Do I have what it takes?' All that rough and tumble, all that daring and superhero dress up, all of that is a boy seeking to prove that he does have what it takes. He was made in the image of a warrior God. Nearly all a man does is fueled by his search for validation, that longing he carries for an answer to his question," that question I just read.

"Little girls want to know the answer to another question, 'Am I lovely?' The twirling skirts, the dress up, the longing to be pretty and to be seen, that's what it's all about. We're seeking an answer to our question. When I was a girl of maybe five years old, I remember standing on top of the coffee table in my grandparent's living room and singing my heart out. I wanted to capture attention, especially my father's attention. I wanted to be captivating, we all did.

"But for most of us, the answer to the question when we were young was, 'No, there's nothing captivating about you. Get off the coffee table.' Nearly all a woman does in her adult life is fueled by her longing to be delighted in, her longing to be beautiful, to be irreplaceable, to have her question answered, 'Yes.' And down in the depths of our hearts, our question remains unanswered. Or rather, it remains answered in a way that it was answered so badly in our

youth. 'Am I lovely? Do you see me? Do you want to see me? Are you captivated by what you find in me?' We live haunted by that question, yet unaware that it still needs an answer."

There's the source of the self-doubt. This need for validation, this need for affirmation. This need to be loved, this need to be cherished. Women are made with that desire. And to deny it is to deny femininity itself. And so, what I've tried to write about in "The Fair Sex" is how to help our daughters gain the confidence to be feminine, to be a girl, to be who she is without having to be defined by masculine characteristics, which is society's answer to this problem.

Moms and dads can both answer that question and meet that need. But it is primarily the father who does it best, if he does it at all.

LuAnne Crane: Well, that's why you've devoted a significant portion of this book to that whole concept of fathers and daughters. And we will be talking a lot more about that in the days to come. In fact, we certainly hope to hear from you and your daughter, Danae, talking about that from a personal level.

Dr. Dobson: I can't wait to do that, by the way.

LuAnne Crane: That will be fun.

Dr. Dobson: It's going to be fun talking together.

LuAnne Crane: But just for now, give us the essence of what you mean at this point.

Dr. Dobson: Well, it comes down to the fact that a father is the first man in a little girl's life. If he affirms her, if he loves her, if he notices her, if he calls her pretty, if she seems valuable to him, then her self-esteem is built on that foundation.

Now mothers are extremely important to daughters too, and I would not for a moment minimize the role that she plays. But self-worth hangs precariously for a girl on her relationship with her dad. So, if he is so busy that he doesn't notice and he doesn't hear her when she talks, and when he makes little comments about the fact she's putting on a few pounds, boy, I heard that over and over again from college aged women that I report in this book.

You know, she'll come down to breakfast and start to eat a roll or something and the dad will say, "You know where that's going? That's going right to your hips and legs." Those kind of things burn their way into the soul of a girl. So much is related to the physical body and the perceptions of beauty. And a father can do so much to elevate a girl at that point.

LuAnne, we would need eight more programs to talk about this, but I really do want to give that greater emphasis because it is a key to this issue of dealing with this vulnerability of the feminine soul and how to go about doing that.

LuAnne Crane:

Dr., along those lines, if I may, I'd like to just read a short paragraph out of this chapter, "The Fair Sex," in your book, *Bringing Up Girls*.

You said, "I urge all parents, but especially fathers, to work at building your daughter's self-concept throughout her childhood. Tell her she's pretty every chance you get. Hug her, compliment her admirable traits, build her confidence by giving her your time and attention. Defend her when she is struggling, and let her know that she has a place in your heart that is reserved only for her. She will never forget it."

And if I can say, Dr., I have a dad who did that for me when I was a girl.

Dr. Dobson:

And you know what he was doing, LuAnne? He was answering the question that we heard from Stasi Eldredge on your behalf. He was saying that you are the person you want to be. And dads can do it.

But I need to emphasize that it is not easy to do it today because there is so much pressure on family life. You want to build this kind of confidence in a girl? You need strong family relationships that allow that confidence to grow and allows that question to be answered.

But we need to admit that good family life requires a sacrifice today. If you want to address the emptiness that I've described here in "The Fair Sex," you do it with time and you do it with love and you do it with talk and conversation. Childhood lasts only a brief moment, and it needs to be given priority. When it's passing before your eyes, watch your kids carefully. Think about what they're feeling and consider the influences that they are under. Then do what's best for them.

Without being self-serving here, let me give an example from my own early parenting experiences. Danae was three years of age when I got my PhD. The whole world opened up to me, it was remarkable what took place and all kinds of things happened. Then I published *Dare To Discipline*. Hundreds and hundreds of speaking engagements came. It was just a time that was very heady for me.

And I almost made a tragic mistake, because I was so absorbed in what I was doing that that little girl, and later that little boy, around my feet, were getting what was left over. Most men, at one time or another, go through something like that. And then they have to decide what they're going to do. It was a tough choice for me to walk out of the university and academia, which I loved and I felt accepted there, and open a little two room office which I called Focus on the Family. And I did that largely because I wanted to be home. And I felt the need to be with my family more. I didn't want to travel as much and I saw the need to invest in my kids.

And when I look at my life today, other than marrying Shirley and becoming a follower of Jesus Christ, that decision was the most consequential of anything I've ever done. But that relationship that we built in those early days would have been lost if I had invested every single resource into a career.

If you're going to meet the individual, and they're different, individual needs of boys and girls, you have to understand the difference between them and set out to give them what they need. And how you do that is an individual matter, but it is critically important.

LuAnne Crane: And here you sit, Dr., many years later obviously, as you said, reaping the benefits of that. But we're talking to fathers who can't see that far ahead. And what you're saying is, you sacrifice now, you become obedient to what the Lord is laying on your heart, how he made you the dad to those children right there and you will never regret it.

Dr. Dobson: And LuAnne, I didn't give up anything. I was walking away from a career that I loved, or at least stepping back from it. But under the influence of both Shirley and my father, I made the hard decision and didn't lose a thing. What we're doing right now is a product of it. I just found other ways to use my talents and to do what God asked me to do.

LuAnne Crane: Well, Dr., we're coming down really to the final minutes of this Family Talk broadcast, and you ended the chapter entitled The Fair Sex with a beautiful poem, which through poetry really expresses, I guess what you would call the transient nature of childhood. Share that with us.

Dr. Dobson: Well, the essence of it is that your kids are just passing through town. They're not going to be there very long.

LuAnne Crane: Yeah, I'm starting to see that.

Dr. Dobson: I mean, it really takes my breath away when I look back on how quickly those kids grew up. And what you're going to do, you better decide to do, because you're going to be hugging them good-bye. I don't want to make everybody cry, but that's the way it is. Time passes so fast.

And you have to decide what's really important, what outweighs everything else? And especially the spiritual goals that you're trying to accomplish, that won't wait. And I included the lyrics of a poem that I just love. It's called "The Hope Chest Song," and I wish I had written this. She really gets the essence of the brevity of childhood.

She says, "Her momma bought her a hope chest to keep her dreams inside. All the precious memories, little things she'd like to hide. A magic wand, an old rag doll, some plastic pearls, because after all, a little girl is only a little girl so long

and tender hearts needs their stars to wish upon. Because one day you will turn around and she will be gone, a little girl is only a little girl so long.

"One day when she got home from school, she slipped a little note beneath the tattered lining and here is what she wrote, 'Roses are red, violets are blue, put an X in the box if you like me too.' A little girl is only a little girl so long and tender hearts need their stars to wish upon. Because one day you will turn around and she will be gone, a little girl is only a little girl so long.

"They married in the garden on a perfect July day, in a horse and carriage they waved and rode away. Momma went inside to put away her wedding dress and spotted a letter lying on the old hope chest. It said, 'A little girl is only a little girl so long. Your lonely heart might need a star to wish upon. So look inside once in a while to bring the memories home. A little girl is only ... a little girl is only a little girl, and I will always be your little girl, so long.'"

LuAnne, that means so much to me because my little girl is gone.

LuAnne Crane: Yeah. And mine is too.

Dr. Dobson: And my son is gone. And we've entered a wonderful period of lives of a peer relationship. I no longer have to be a parent, although I'll always be a father. But something precious happened in those childhood years, and I can't recover a one of them. They're gone, the records in the books.

I know there are many moms and dads out there that would give anything for one more day. For the parents who still have little girls and little boys at home, don't let them get away from you, and enjoy every precious moment.

LuAnne Crane: Well, I know that touches my heart as a mom, Dr., I mean, I've sent two of my children, pretty much, out, and I still have two more. And you better believe that I am going to latch on to every one of those memories.

Once you start seeing them go out of the house, it does change your perception. You don't wish those things away. I mean, I have one that's going to be starting to drive on his own soon, and all of a sudden I look at that time that I carpool him now very differently. I'm counting the weeks until he takes the keys and goes. And instead of wishing that away, I'm thinking, "Wow, Lord, this is precious time." I only have a few more weeks to be the one that picks him up after school and gets that 15 minute ride home. And I'm going to capture every one of them.

Dr. Dobson: What a shame that so many parents figure this out when it's too late. I have found that fathers often take the empty nest harder than mothers, because they haven't been thinking about this and all of a sudden they're confronted by it and they try to grab and hold, and they try to make up in the last year or two for what they missed as it goes along.

I hope that this book, and that chapter particularly, will focus on the things that matter most and encourage some parents to take another look at the way you're living your life. This is a fast paced society that we live in, it will do everything it can to interfere with your family life. Resist it and fight it with all the tenacity that's within you.

Roger Marsh:

Well this has been a classic edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. You've been listening to Dr. Dobson discussing the themes and ideas behind his timeless book called, *Bringing Up Girls*.

You can visit today's broadcast page at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) to find out how easy it is to request your copy of this insightful work. That's [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) and then click on to the broadcast page.

We would also love to hear how these two insightful programs have impacted you and your family. When you go now to Family Talk's Facebook page, you can comment on today's broadcast post. Simply search for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk on Facebook.

We look forward to hearing from you there.

Well, that's all the time we have for this week. Be sure to join us again Monday for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

I'm Roger Marsh, have a blessed weekend.

Announcer:

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