



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Father-Daughter Memories

Guest(s): Danae Dobson

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Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute, supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and on today's program, I know that Father's Day is still a week away, and this will be our first Father's Day here at the JDFI, knowing that Dr. Dobson is not here with us to celebrate. He's celebrating with the Lord in Heaven. But on today's edition of Family Talk, we thought it appropriate to revisit a conversation he had with his daughter, Danae, reliving some of the father-daughter memories that they've experienced over the years together. So without further ado, here now is how Dr. Dobson began that conversation, lo those many years ago, on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello everyone. I'm Dr. James Dobson and as we approach Father's Day, I thought it would be appropriate to talk about memories. Memories that were created during our childhood, yours and mine. And I'm fascinated by how the human mind works. If your stored experiences were warm and loving, they're probably precious to you. You can look back and almost relive them. But if you were neglected or abused as a child or you never had a father or you had a mother who hated you, there are dark clouds lingering in what one popular song referred to as the back roads of my mind.

But we want to focus today on the happy memories that remain. One of God's richest blessings to me has been the memories that are almost all warm and positive because I had such a happy childhood. I have been also given a vivid memory, which worked something like a video recorder capturing the highlights, and they began very early. For example, one of my earliest recollections occurred when I must have been 18 months of age or earlier because I was in a bassinet.

I was lying there, and a woman, an older woman, came and looked over at me and smiled. She turned out to be my great-grandmother. Her name to us was Nanny. And I remember her leaning over and attending to me and talking to me, and she was wearing a cap. I didn't know it then, but it was wool. There were strands of yarn hanging down where I was, and on the bottom of each of them

was a furry ball, and I remember that vividly. And again, that was confirmed by my great-grandmother later. I went on to love her. She lived to be 99 years of age, and we had a wonderful relationship.

I have many memories of Nanny, and that was one of my earliest. Believe it or not, I even remembered the smell of pablum. People today don't even know what pablum was. It was a food that was fed to babies. If I'd known any better, I wouldn't have eaten it, but I remember that smell today and a number of early memories like that. When I was three, I was walking with my dad on a street near my home. He was holding my hand and I remember being very proud to be holding the hand of my father. And that is just a brief memory. I don't know where we were going or what we said, but that's a memory.

So I have many vivid memories that occurred in my early, early years. And then I was married to Shirley obviously, and five years later, my daughter, Danae, came along. She turned out to have an even better memory than I have. Honestly, she does, and it's almost scary to know that that little video camera was running inside her head from early childhood because she remembers things I don't even want her to remember. I have really enjoyed when we get together sharing our memories because they were precious to both of us, and I remember a lot of what she remembers. And so we thought we would share some of that with you today. Danae, it's such a pleasure. Delighted to have you. Welcome.

Danae Dobson: Oh dad, thanks for having me on, not only as your daughter, but as your guest. And instead of waiting until the end of the program, I just would like to honor you right now by saying how much I appreciate the time and the commitment that you've put into your role as a dad. I know that the Lord has given you a lot of responsibility in ministry, which has been very time consuming, and yet, you've always been there for Ryan and me, no matter what our need was. And on Father's Day a couple years ago, I gave you a little decorative porcelain tray that has a sketch of a dad hugging his six year old daughter. And the words underneath read "Always there." And that's how I feel about you, dad. I'm so grateful.

Dr. James Dobson: What a good way to start the program, Danae. I consider that little gift as a treasure. I don't have it in front of me, but it has writing on it that just spoke to my heart, and it is sitting in a prominent place in our home. But more than that, one of the highlights of my life is being a father to you and Ryan and a husband to Shirley. Everything else that's happened in my life, everything else of significance means nothing compared to our love for the Lord and what you and Ryan and Shirley have contributed to me. So it's mutual.

Danae Dobson: Aw. Well, my early bonding with you goes back as far as I can remember, and I was thinking about how one of my favorite memories hands down with you is going on bike rides. First in the little seat on the back of your bike. And then when I was older, my own bicycle. And that in itself is a very happy memory for me because it was on my birthday. You wheeled out my own bike and it had

that 70s banana seat with the big pink and yellow flowers on it, and it had a little white wicker basket with big plastic flowers. I thought that was so cool. And I mean, you just made my sixth birthday a very happy and significant occasion.

Dr. James Dobson: We had a very close relationship, didn't we? From your earliest childhood, I just enjoyed, I made you laugh. We had so much fun together. And those Saturday bike rides where you rode behind me, I think you were three years of age, maybe four when we began doing that. And I have great memories of it as well.

Danae Dobson: Yeah, that was special. And another series of sentimental memories for me is the time that we used to spend in the car in the mornings when you would drive me to school. And I remember you had a game that you used to play with me called "Pilot to Co-Pilot," and you would pretend like we were about to take off in a plane and the inside of our car was the cockpit, and you gave me instructions like I was the co-pilot and the gear shift became the flight control, and you would instruct me to hit the little buttons and switches that operated the various systems, and you would pretend like our car was headed down the runway to take off and you'd make the sound effects. I thought that was so much fun.

Dr. James Dobson: It was a little Volkswagen as you recall. Isn't it interesting that that sticks out in your mind after all these years? You remember a simple game that we played with each other.

Danae Dobson: I know. And those are the things that are so fun and you look back on and you just have to smile because they just touched your heart so much, even back then. And then there were the teaching moments. I recall one morning on the way to school, you taught me north, south, east, and west, and you said the sun rises in the east. And I remember turning around in the car and seeing the sun shining in our rear window. And from that moment on, I knew the direction of East.

Dr. James Dobson: You never know as a parent what's sticking, what your child is hearing and learning, but I had forgotten that conversation. But that's still in your mind, isn't it?

Danae Dobson: It is, yeah. And we also listened to music on the way to school as you'll recall. In those days it was eight track tapes and you had The Beatles' *Abbey Road*. I loved the songs, *Octopus's Garden* and *Here Comes the Sun*. I still do. And in fact, this year, as you'll recall, just a couple months ago when we were together in the car, just you and me, I downloaded *Here Comes the Sun* on my Bluetooth, and we turned it up loud and experienced it all over again and just enjoyed it.

Dr. James Dobson: Danae, that was really something meaningful to me. It was only a couple of months ago and you brought a copy and we were able to listen to that music and it was nighttime and we were driving around and we went all the way

around where we were going two or three times while we listened to that music. It's going to thrill a lot of our listeners that Beatles music was what I shared with you, but those were the days.

Danae Dobson: And what a lot of people don't know is the very first Woof story about a dog that I wrote at age 12 grew out of my relationship with you, dad, and our morning carpools on the way to school.

Dr. James Dobson: Describe that. I think people would be interested in it.

Danae Dobson: Well, you invented this character of a little dog named Woof, and you used to come up with different characters that you would tell us stories about, but that was our favorite. When I was a little older, we had a carpool with about five or six kids who would ride with us to school in the mornings, and they all got into these Woof stories and you would tell us one adventure after another. And I think you got a little tired of telling Woof stories at one point.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, let me share that because I was under a lot of pressure to come up with a different narrative every morning. The kids loved it. They all demanded it. And so I did get tired of it. It went on and on and on, and I decided that it was time for Woof to die. Looking back on it, that was not a real smart thing to do.

Danae Dobson: No, it was not.

Dr. James Dobson: Woof got run over and you kids were all crying. I couldn't believe it. I didn't mean to do that. And when I came that night to pick you up, you all got in the car and you were all talking at once and you said "You're going to bring Woof back. You can't let him die." So I had to carry on with the story. And you went on to tell your own story about Woof in a book. You were an early writer, you were really good with words. You wrote this when you were 12 years old published by Word Publishers, and it sold 40,000 copies. That was the beginning of your writing career, wasn't it?

Danae Dobson: It really was. When I look back on my childhood years, that stands out as one of my favorite gifts that the Lord gave to me was the opportunity to have published a book at age 12. And it's still very significant to me.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you've now written 24 books, I think.

Danae Dobson: 24 books. Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Some of them for children, some of them for teenagers. And people still tell me on the street, "I grew up reading *Woof*. I love that book."

Danae Dobson: Well, you know, when I go on speaking engagements, that's the book that I hear about more than any other from people. They come up to me and tell me that

their kids love that book or they love that book when they were younger because it's been around for so long. So that really warms my heart.

Dr. James Dobson: Tell me what about our relationship was the most meaningful to you? Because it started very, very early and I'd like to know your perspective on it.

Danae Dobson: Well, I would say that one of the things that I would commend you for is placing spiritual emphasis in our family. For instance, not just attending church, but being involved. Going to events there, attending Sunday school, developing friendships at church. I was very active in youth group and that was a godsend for me at that time in my life. And I was thinking about how one of my girlfriends said a while back that she has a teen daughter and she and her husband, the mother and father go to church, but their daughter doesn't want to go and they don't make her. I think that's a mistake because you don't know what God might do in that child's life at church, but you have to get them there. You've got to get to the starting point first in order for the Lord to be able to do a beautiful work in their life. And that was important in our family and church was not an option with you and mom. I mean we went. When the doors were open, we were there.

Dr. James Dobson: I would recommend that parents make this a necessity. We are going to church. That's who we are. We serve God, we love God and we want to learn about Him. And so that is going to happen. So just go with the flow. A memory I have of you Danae, I'm not sure you're real proud of this, but when you were 12 years of age, you had the developed spiritually quite a bit, and you came to me and said, "Dad, I want to be baptized." And your mom and I also worked in the days ahead to make sure you did understand what baptism meant and you had a clear understanding of it. We went to the church and the pastor who had allowed you to be baptized at 12 brought you into the water and just before he baptized you, he said, "Before we do Danae, tell us what baptism means to you." And you said, "I don't know."

Danae Dobson: I froze. There were a lot of people out there.

Dr. James Dobson: Believe me, I know it. Everybody giggled.

Danae Dobson: Yeah. I was at that stage in life where it didn't take much to make me freeze. So that's what that was all about. But I really liked how you and mom emphasized spiritual training in everyday occurrences, and it was because of your teaching that I learned to for instance, it's not okay. It is a big deal to hear God's name used in vain on TV or in conversation. And the importance of tithing. A percentage of my money in our family that was 10%.

So when I was five years of age, you had three little jars. They may have been baby food jars and they were empty, and you had put masking tape on the top of the lids and you wrote three words on those three jars, God, save, and spend.

So each of those lids had those words where I could see them. They were in my bedroom and I kept those jars for several years.

In fact, I think I might still have them. So that was very significant spiritual training for me. And in our family, you and mom would just bring the Lord up in conversation. It was almost as common as saying pass the salt. As early as I could remember to this day. When you and mom would see a gorgeous animal or a beautiful colorful fish, you would make comments like, "Look at God's design. Look at those colors. Can't you just imagine the hand of God tracing the markings around that tiger's face?" That's always on my mind too now when I see a beautiful or unique creature because you put it there.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, we were attempting to follow the Scriptural prescription that is written in Deuteronomy 6:4. I have it in front of me because I hoped it would come up today. This is what we were trying to do, and it begins with these words. "These commandments that I give to you today are to be upon your hearts, impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home or when you go for a walk along the road, when you lie down or when you get up, tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your forehead. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates." It can't be said more strongly than that when He's describing throughout your day that we are to be mindful of this responsibility to give the history of the Jewish people to children, so it won't be forgotten.

He's talking about the escape from Egypt and how the Lord led them through the wilderness for 40 years and now He's brought them to the promised land. The Lord did not want that to be forgotten. He wanted it to be impressed upon children's lives so that they can live according to the commandments and that relates to us as well. It's what I call "job one" as parents. It outranks every other objective in life. Don't let your kids grow up not knowing what God has done for us, who He is and what His commandments are to us, and make sure your children know who Jesus is. That's the message to us as parents.

Danae Dobson: Yes, that's a wonderful Scripture about the importance of having passion for teaching your children about the Lord. And I'd just like to remind moms and dads that kids are sponges. I mean, they are watching and listening to your reactions, your comments, and they will often adopt those as their own. I know it's a lot of pressure and you can't help but fail at times, but just to have that awareness that your kids are looking at you as an example for how they should think and act and react, they take their cues from you.

And Dad, I was remembering when we were riding in the car near our home, and you shared this story in your film series, but Ryan was about five years of age at the time, and we passed by a movie theater that had a rated X movie title on the marquee. So I asked you, "Daddy, that's a dirty movie, isn't it?" "Yes, Danae, that's a dirty bad movie, and God doesn't want us to watch those kind of movies." Well, Ryan was taking all of this in the backseat, but he made no comment. But he went away and he thought about it because later that night at

bedtime, we were kneeling beside his bed to pray, and he started with, "Dear Jesus, help me not to see any dirty movies where everybody's spitting on each other."

Dr. James Dobson: That was his understanding of what a dirty movie was. I think he was only two years of age, maybe close to three.

Danae Dobson: He may have been younger, but I mean that was the worst thing that he could come up with in his little mind. But yeah, I would encourage parents to do what you and Mom did, bringing the Lord in into everyday conversation, looking for windows of opportunity to compliment Him, to talk about who He is, what's important to Him, what He expects of us. I was on a hike recently with my niece and nephew, Lincoln and Luci, and something came up in the conversation and I had a golden opportunity to explain to them why we don't say, "oh my God." You know that the Lord's name is reverent and holy. "Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name."

Dr. James Dobson: Danae, you made a wonderful point there. Children are sponges, they hear and see everything. Not all of it goes into a memory bank that they will be able to recall, but they're influenced by it, and they carry that. If you want them to love God and revere Him, you have to be intentional about doing that.

Danae Dobson: Right. And sometimes they can just be a moment in time where you can share something. Like one of my friends said that when they hear a curse word in a movie, the mother will just say, "We don't talk that way." So it's just a simple statement that's making the point that we're set apart. We're different as Christians. We don't talk like the rest of the world.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, Danae we're out of time. And I've loved talking to you today and I appreciate you. I am especially thankful for the fact that you and Ryan and Laura and our grandkids love the Lord. That is the most important thing in my life, and you've helped us get that said today.

Danae Dobson: Aw, thank you. And I'd like to say, Happy Father's Day to you and all the dads listening. We appreciate you.

Dr. James Dobson: Well thank you. The Lord's blessings to you, Danae. Thanks for being with us.

Danae Dobson: Thank you!

Roger Marsh: Well, some heartfelt sentiments there from Dr. James Dobson and his daughter, Danae. And as they shared those memories, it just reminds us that even the smallest moments often can become our children's most treasured gifts. You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk as we revisited a conversation Dr. Dobson had with his daughter, Danae, here in our JDFI Family Talk studios, sharing those special father-daughter memories. And as we prepare to celebrate our first

Father's Day with Dr. Dobson not being with us, being with the Lord, remember that you can hear this conversation again like all of the broadcasts that we feature here on Family Talk when you go to jdfi.org or drjamesdobson.org.

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Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and on behalf of all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, thanks so much for joining us today. Be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

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