



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** When Love Ends– Part 1

**Guest(s):** Jackie M. Johnson

**Air Date:** February 3, 2025

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: Well, welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. You know, Valentine's Day is less than two weeks away and this month we are tackling a topic that affects millions of Americans -- the challenging journey of healing after a relationship ends. The pain of a breakup can feel overwhelming, leaving us with deep questions about God's plan and our own worth. Well, today here on Family Talk, we are joined by someone who understands that journey intimately. Author Jackie M. Johnson has written a book called *When Love Ends and the Ice Cream Carton is Empty* and she shares her personal story of navigating difficult breakups and finding hope through faith.

Through her own healing journey, Jackie discovered biblical principles that helped her move from heartache to hope, and she has poured these insights into three books that have touched countless lives, offered practical wisdom for those seeking to rebuild after relationship loss. Jackie's not only an accomplished author and avid blogger, she's also Dr. Dobson's executive assistant and a beloved member of the staff here at the James Dobson Family Institute. Whether you're currently healing from a breakup or know someone who is, today's conversation will remind you that you're not alone in your pain, but more importantly, you'll discover how God can transform even our deepest hurts into something beautiful. Here now is Dr. James Dobson with our guest Jackie M. Johnson on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, today we're going to be talking about a program that we are long overdue in discussing. It's one that I have cared about. I wrote about it in my book, *Love Must Be Tough*, but we have a guest here today who has experienced this single life and she has written a book called *When Love Ends and the Ice Cream Carton is Empty*. We're going to have to have her explain that to us. Now, the reason this topic is so important is because the United States Census Bureau says that the average age for women to get married is now 27. Boy, that's changed a lot. And the average age for men is 29 and the people who get married at the average age are already nearly halfway through the fertile years of life, and that changes a whole lot. Additionally, there are 110 million unmarried people in the United States alone, most of whom have remained single for their whole life.

Why have we not dealt with this subject more in the past? If you are single and you've waited for us to talk about this subject, today is the day and I'm sorry we've taken a long time to get to it. With people putting off saying I do until later in life or remaining single, the dating and breaking up experience that begins in the teen years can continue on until the early fifties and no matter how young or old you are, breaking up can be an extremely difficult and emotionally draining experience. Before we went on the air, we were recalling a song that was popular in 1962. In fact, it hit number one, and I'm not going to sing it to you or we'd go off the air. "Don't take your love away from me. Don't leave my heart in misery." Those of you who have lived a little longer in life may remember that because that was a very popular song.

Well, I mentioned the guest who is here and the book she's written. Let me tell you more about her as she is an executive assistant to me here at James Dobson Family Institute. Her name is Jackie Johnson. She is good at what she does and she's done a lot of thinking about this subject because she's been there and we want to plumb the depths of the topic with her today. She is an experienced writer. She's written three books. She writes a blog called "Living Single," and she has a BA in English and Communication from Trinity International University in Illinois. Jackie, Shirley and I love and appreciate you so much and it's time that we had you in the studio and thanks for joining us.

Jackie M. Johnson: Thank you. It's good to be here.

Dr. James Dobson: How long has this book been out?

Jackie M. Johnson: The book came out in 2010 with Moody Publishers, but the topic is timeless because people are always dating and breaking up and they can use some help and hope and encouragement.

Dr. James Dobson: I read in the prep for today that you've sold more than 500,000 books?

Jackie M. Johnson: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that right?

Jackie M. Johnson: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: My goodness, you're a big deal.

Jackie M. Johnson: Well, I'm just trying to help people.

Dr. James Dobson: Are most of those books on this subject?

Jackie M. Johnson: My other books are on the topic of prayer and I think the overarching thing I write about is hope and encouragement and that can take a lot of different forms, so I'm glad to be here today to talk about this.

Dr. James Dobson: Jackie, let's go back to Neil Sedaka's song. Why is breaking up so very, very hard?

Jackie M. Johnson: It is hard. Letting go is never easy because you have to say goodbye to someone that you loved or you liked, and the thing is you've been spending time with this person, you've grown attached to them. You probably might be in love with them, especially if it's a long-term relationship. Now you're on your own again. It's a transition and I think it's hard to recover from a breakup because I think God designed us for attachment and connection, not for detachment and disconnection. And as singles sometimes we go through these series of hello, goodbye, dating and breaking up, relationship after relationship and sadly nobody teaches us how to get over a breakup or how to deal with endings.

Dr. James Dobson: You know I've not seen another book on this subject, yet let's name some of the emotions that go along with it. There is rejection and there is loneliness and there is pain and hurt and sorrow, and there are many, many other emotions that accompany it that describe some of them.

Jackie M. Johnson: Right. Hurt and sadness are really the most common. You could be angry, you could feel betrayed, they could have found somebody else and put you by the wayside.

Dr. James Dobson: Sometimes the breakup is not very kind either, isn't it?

Jackie M. Johnson: That's true. That's true. I've gone through a number of relationships. One guy moved halfway across the country and wouldn't return my phone calls. That's not all.

Dr. James Dobson: And this is somebody you had a relationship established?

Jackie M. Johnson: Yes. Yes, for over a year. For over a year.

Dr. James Dobson: He didn't return your phone call?

Jackie M. Johnson: No. So, he was a coward and he would not even talk to me. I had someone break up with me over email after two years.

Dr. James Dobson: Sent you an-

Jackie M. Johnson: Yeah, email.

Dr. James Dobson: You got to be kidding.

Jackie M. Johnson: No, we did talk the next day or two in person, but the information came to me by email. So I think that if you do break up with someone, you want to be kind, you want to be respectful, you want to speak the truth in love. That's what the Bible says, "Speak the truth in love."

Dr. James Dobson: You called them cowards to do that.

Jackie M. Johnson: I did, yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Would you agree that women are more likely to suffer from the breakup of a relationship?

Jackie M. Johnson: That's an interesting question, Dr. Dobson, because I've heard the phrase that women bend but men break. And sometimes I think women do feel that emotion strongly, but maybe we have better coping mechanisms because we have our friends to lean on, we have the Bible to lean on. We're looking for answers of how to get over it and maybe not to generalize, but sometimes men tough it out and try to figure it out on their own or stuff their emotions.

Dr. James Dobson: You mentioned cowardice. I think that's one reason people do such a bad job of letting the other person know that it's not going to work. They had rather write an email. I mean that's about the worst thing I've heard.

Jackie M. Johnson: Right, and it's hard to believe that someone who once said they liked you or loved you would treat you in this fashion and say nothing or not speak with you face to face. I think as believers that we are to be respectful and be gentle and here we are trying to speak the truth in love. I know I just said that, but there's a way to do it in a way not to do it because the thing is if you don't deal with your breakup pain, then you carry it from one relationship to the next to the next to the next, and that can affect your dating life and possibly your future marriage.

Roger Marsh: You're listening to Family Talk and that was our host Dr. James Dobson with his guest Jackie M. Johnson. Jackie is the author of the book *When Love Ends and the Ice Cream Carton is Empty*. She and Dr. Dobson have been talking about the pain of breakups and what to do when a relationship doesn't work out the way you planned. Let's return now to Dr. Dobson's conversation with Jackie Johnson right here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's talk about what changes when you have established a relationship and you have the assumption that that's leading to marriage and you've built your future around that relationship because you foresee marriage and children. I think at that point women do suffer more than men typically because they hear Big Ben gonging in the background. The time is passing and I mentioned earlier the fertility periods only about 27, 28 years, maybe 30 and the latter end of that, it's sometimes not easy for a pregnancy to occur. And as the time goes on, another year, another Christmas, another Easter, another summer, and you get closer and closer to that time when the dream of having a baby and raising a child and pouring your life into him or her is becoming less and less likely. So when a breakup occurs, all of that, it looms before you. I got to start over now with somebody else and this is getting away from me. There's a panic that is associated with that experience, isn't there?

Jackie M. Johnson: There can be, definitely, especially if you're a woman who wants to have children and have a family. Let me give you an illustration from my own life. I was dating someone for two years, which is a pretty long time. We met in our church singles group and we did everything together. We went on mission trips, we were in a prayer group together, we were in leadership. We spent a lot of time together and then I went away on a trip, came back and he was the one who sent me the email that said he had found somebody else and this person-

Dr. James Dobson: Did you know the person he found?

Jackie M. Johnson: I did.

Dr. James Dobson: You got to be kidding.

Jackie M. Johnson: No, she was in our singles group as well, and he told me by email that he felt led to now be with her. So it kind of felt like a double betrayal because-

Dr. James Dobson: Felt led. I mean that is a cowardly statement in itself. "Blame it on God. I haven't done this to you, God told me not to continue the relationship." I don't believe that's likely to be true in most cases.

Jackie M. Johnson: Well, it was really difficult, Dr. Dobson because we had talked about marriage. We had talked about should we have children or not. We had talked about a future and I was stunned. I was shocked. I think I was in shock because I didn't see it coming, I had no idea, and this person was a friend of mine. So I felt like there was a double betrayal in that he never said anything, she never said anything. I felt rejected. Why did he pick her over me?

Dr. James Dobson: There is also a certain assault on self-worth that occurs at a time like this, isn't there? There's this ache that says, "What's wrong with me? Why did this happen to me?" There's also a spiritual dimension to it. You and I talked before about the fact that people blame God and speaking of him and say, "Why would you let this happen to me? Didn't you hear my prayers? Was there something wrong with my prayers that you didn't hear it and now this has occurred?" Are those things you talk about in your book?

Jackie M. Johnson: Absolutely. I thought a lot about what I wanted to include in this book because like you said, I couldn't find another book that would help me. Where were the Bible verses? Where was the comfort? Where was the hope and the encouragement? Where is God in all of this? What do I do with forgiveness? I mean, a lot of things were swirling in my head.

Dr. James Dobson: Anger is one of them, isn't it?

Jackie M. Johnson: Absolutely, definitely.

Dr. James Dobson: Jackie, did anybody help you? Did anybody come alongside and put an arm around you? Any girlfriend, anybody pastor who said, "Jackie, you're going to get over this, you're going to deal with this. This is very painful, but you are a worthy person and God has not abandoned you." Did anybody talk to you that way?

Jackie M. Johnson: Yes. I am really blessed to have a good group of friends and my friends are very comforting and nurturing and supportive. They prayed for me, they prayed with me. There was even a class at our church about getting over loss, so it wasn't specifically for a breakup, but I thought, "Well, I guess that's the closest thing that I could find to it." But you talked about my relationship with God and how that plays into all this. Sure, I had a ton of questions -- why did this happen? Why am I not enough? Why is God keeping me from lasting love? And it took me a really long time.

I would search the Scriptures. I would sit on my bed with a pen and paper and look for every single word about hope, about encouragement, about getting over a loss, and as a Christian I can look to the one who loves me most, which is Jesus Christ, and have a new perspective. That new perspective is God's truth and God's truth doesn't change, and one of the main things I learned was that God is not withholding from me something good. He's protecting me and saving me for his best and I can trust Him even when I do not understand. That was huge.

Dr. James Dobson: You can trust him even when you can't track Him is one of my phrases. I also wrote a book similar to this. It's not specifically about singles, but it's about the breakup of a marriage and what happens. But I believe what I wrote there is very much relevant to the breakup of a couple that's not married. And I don't know anybody else that's written this Jackie, but I believe it's absolutely true and I've gotten thousands of letters from people saying this was helpful to them. So when you began to sense that the other person doesn't feel about you the way you feel about them, in your case you were blindsided, but usually you're seeing the other person drift. The natural tendency in that situation is to grab and hold, to plead, to beg, to say, "You can't do this to me. What will I do without you?" To build a cage around them. You know what that does to the other person? It sends them the other way.

It's the quickest way to end a relationship when you begin to show that you are in a state of panic, which is the usual way because the whole world falls apart. Everything you had hoped for, everything you look forward to in the future, a life together as a family and now it's gone and if what I just said is true, the best thing you can do in a moment like that is to move the other way. Sometimes the person who is moving away will turn around and come back and I can tell you that happened with Shirley and me, because I graduated from college before she did and I went off to the army and I came back one Christmas. She had assumed the relationship was going to continue. What I was thinking is that as soon as I get out of the army, I'm going to the University of Texas to get a Ph.D. and I can't afford a wife and I need to give my attention to my studies and I

don't think that we are headed toward marriage. And how do I tell her this? Well, there ain't no easy way.

So, at the end of the Christmas vacation, we went out and we had an absolutely wonderful evening. We laughed, we had fun. We came back about 12 o'clock at night to her dorm and I said to myself, "This is the moment," and I said, "Shirley, I've been doing a lot of thinking and I just need to tell you I don't think this is leading to marriage and I've got plans of what I think the Lord wants me to do and I think that we ought to see other people." Have you ever heard that one before?

Jackie M. Johnson: I read your book and Mrs. Shirley Dobson has inspired me.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, she did exactly the right thing. Instead of begging me and putting her arm around me and saying, "Don't do this to me." She said, "Well, I've been thinking the same thing and I think we should see some other people and I think we ought to just go our separate ways and we'll put it on hold for a while. We'll see what happens." I took her to the door. It shocked the daylights out of me because I thought that I was in for a very emotional ordeal, and we stood at the door. I asked her if I could kiss her goodbye and she said, "No, let's shake on it." And with no ado, she went into the dorm and she went into her room and cried all night.

If I had seen that, I would have been gone forever. But the way she let me go, by the time I got back to where I was staying. At 1, 2, 3 o'clock in the morning, I was lying there thinking about having hurt the best friend I ever had, and I began to get this big lump in my throat and I wondered if I could get her back. I went on to the army, went to Fort Ord. I called her and I said, "I couldn't see the forest for the trees and I've made a big mistake and I think we ought to continue the relationship." She was very cool and I wrote her a big long letter and she didn't answer it for two weeks. She was dying inside.

Jackie M. Johnson: Oh my.

Dr. James Dobson: She never let me see it. And by the time I came out of that episode, I didn't want to repeat it. That's personal, but I've seen now in so many others who either break up as singles or they get married and then have a horrible ripping and tearing of flesh. That's what you're writing about, isn't it?

Jackie M. Johnson: Yeah. Thank you for sharing that. That's really important for people to know.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, we're almost out of time, Jackie, but we're not out of content. We need to talk some more. The name of the book is *When Love Ends*. Okay, we're going to take the end of the program the last 30 seconds for you to tell what in the world that has to do with *The Ice Cream Carton is Empty*, the subtitle of the book.

Jackie M. Johnson: Sure. Right. So many times in movies and TV you see somebody breaking up, the girl sitting on her bed with an ice cream carton like a pint size and she's got the spoon and she's crying and eating ice cream. And it's a kind of a popular thing, especially women do to comfort themselves after a breakup, but what we're going to learn is that they're healthier and better ways to cope.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's talk about them next time.

Jackie M. Johnson: Okay. That'd be great. Thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: Jackie, thanks for writing this book for your care for singles, and I think you're going to hear from some people out there who are going through this right now. We'll talk about it next time.

Roger Marsh: Even the most painful endings can become beautiful beginnings when we learn to trust God's bigger plan for our lives. You've been listening to Family Talk and a powerful conversation about healing after heartbreak featuring our own Dr. James Dobson and his guest author, Jackie M. Johnson. Jackie's journey from personal pain to ministry reminds us that God can transform our deepest hurts into sources of hope for others. Now, if you missed any portion of today's broadcast or if you'd like to share it with a friend who needs to hear this message, you can always find that audio on our app or by visiting [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). There you'll also find information about Jackie Johnson's book *When Love Ends and the Ice Cream Carton is Empty*. Again, go to [drjamesdobbson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobbson.org/familytalk) and be sure to join us again next time. You'll hear part two of this powerful conversation.

Well, speaking of hope and healing, I want to tell you about a wonderful free resource from the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. We've created several inspiring reading plans available through the Bible app by YouVersion covering topics from relationships, to parenting, to finding God's purpose for every season of life. Whether you have three minutes or 30, these reading plans bring practical biblical insights right to your smartphone. Just open the Bible app on your phone or tablet, search for Dr. James Dobson and begin your first reading plan today. Here at the JDFI, we are committed to helping people find healing and hope through biblical truth. These daily broadcasts are made possible through the generous support of friends just like you, who value having a trusted voice to turn to during life's challenging seasons.

If today's program about finding hope after heartbreak has touched your heart, would you consider partnering with us? Your tax-deductible donation of any amount helps us continue sharing God's healing truth with those who need it most. You can make a secure donation online when you go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) or if you'd prefer you can 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. Again, that's P.O. Box 39000 Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code, 80949. Well, I'm Roger Marsh and on behalf of Dr. Dobson and all of us here at Family Talk, thanks so much for listening. Be sure to



join us again next time when you'll hear the conclusion of Dr. Dobson's conversation with author Jackie M. Johnson right here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust, for the family you love.

Announcer:

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