



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Homeschooling Today – Part 2

Guest(s): Jay and Heidi St. John

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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 back to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Did you know that Dr. Dobson's wife, Shirley, before she decided to become a stay-at-home mom for their two children, Danae and Ryan, once taught at a public school in California where she truly did treasure that time? And also did you know that Dr. Dobson taught at a public middle school early in his career as well? Well, Doctor has many fond memories of influencing those young minds to be sure, and he and Shirley consider education to be vital for a child's life, instilling in them skill sets that will serve them for their entire lives. Dr. Dobson will also be the first to say however that schools today are very different from when he worked in a school or even from when his children attended public schools in the 1980s. Well, today's program here on Family Talk is part two of Dr. Dobson's conversation about homeschooling and his guests once again are Jay and Heidi St. John.

Now this interview was originally recorded back in 2010, but the concepts and principles that will be discussed during the next half hour are still incredibly relevant even today. Parents, grandparents, you will definitely want to hear what the St. Johns have to say about homeschooling, especially if you've ever considered removing your child from a public or private school system to educate them from home. Now, there are so many faithful Christians in the public school systems who have dedicated their lives to reaching this next generation, and we know that every family situation is different. Perhaps homeschooling may not be right for you, and yet there may be other solutions to some educational problems that you might not have yet considered. While regardless of your situation, as believers we understand that there is in fact a war on children within many schools and it cannot be ignored.

Add to that, the fact that many students also face tremendous amounts of peer pressure to participate in destructive behaviors. They're continually being introduced to worldviews that are not God-led behind the walls of public schools. So our number one job as parents is to teach our children about Jesus Christ and the good news of the gospel. Studies show that there are about 3 million children being homeschooled all across the country right now. So it is a

fact that parents who have made the decision to educate their kids at home are definitely not alone in their efforts.

Now, returning again today here on Family Talk as our guests are Jay and Heidi St. John. Together they are the founders and executive directors of the ministry called Firmly Planted Ministries, an organization that seeks to encourage and equip Christ-centered families. Throughout the year, the St. Johns travel and speak together encouraging couples in their marriages and on their parenting journeys by using God's Word as their primary source for spiritual growth and discussion. So let's join our own Dr. James Dobson right now for his classic conversation with Jay and Heidi St. John right here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Now on yesterday's program, we visited with Heidi and Jay St. John the founder of First Class Homeschool Ministries. They work with churches to help them form local homeschool co-ops. They have six children of their own whom they homeschool, and they have a little one on the way. So Heidi and Jay, we enjoyed our conversation with you so much last time. I say that personally, I really got into what you were saying and we discussed the way you and your family have approached homeschooling because there are different ways to do this. So thank you for being with us again today.

Heidi St. John: You're welcome.

Jay St. John: Thank you.

Heidi St. John: Thanks for having us.

Jay St. John: Good to be here.

Dr. James Dobson: Jay and Heidi, the aspect of homeschooling that means the most to me is the protection of that little spirit.

Heidi St. John: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: That is so fragile and so easily wounded and you can build a little world that allows that child to grow up in a healthy way and not get bludgeoned like... Children are brutal to each other.

Heidi St. John: Yes, they are.

Dr. James Dobson: They really are and that starts in kindergarten or even before, in nursery school, but you have to watch that too because kids can be pretty hard on each other in that way. And what you do is that you allow those youngsters to get established and accepting who they are before they're thrown into that kind of dog-eat-dog world. That's what Ray Moore put his great emphasis on and I like it.

Heidi St. John: Mm-hmm.

Jay St. John: That's right.

Heidi St. John: Oh, yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: And what I am learning right now as a result of new studies that are coming out is that Christians are not losing their kids in college like we used to think, they're not losing them in high school, they're losing them in middle school and elementary school.

Heidi St. John: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: That's where we're losing them. And if you're going to make your contribution spiritually, you better do it early.

Heidi St. John: I think one of the things that we forget when we're putting our kids in school and we're not really looking to see what it is that they're learning and who is teaching them is that education is never neutral. We've grown up thinking education was neutral. We could just put them in school and that'd be the end of it, and it's reading, writing, and arithmetic, but it's not reading, writing, and arithmetic. There is a worldview that is being imparted to those children when they're very, very young and Jesus said in Luke 6:40 that when a student is fully trained, he'll be like his teacher. We need to be thinking about who is teaching our children and looking at education as an opportunity for discipleship. When we talk to homeschool parents or people who are thinking about homeschooling, we remind them education is discipleship. Who's discipling your child?

Dr. James Dobson: I mentioned at the start of the program last time that the modern homeschool's movement started in the early 1980s, but the homeschool movement was well established in the 1800s, the 1700s. Nearly every child was taught at home. There were no public schools and they learned the classics. They learned to read and write and compute at home and it worked. If you look at our Founding Fathers and how they learned and what they read, it is not a new concept. We've just rediscovered it.

Heidi St. John: That's right.

Jay St. John: That's right.

Heidi St. John: And for me, it has come over several years of realizing what my limits are, when I need a break. I really rely heavily on my husband for that and also a network of other moms around me who are doing the same thing. They're like-minded. They can relate to me. So when I've had a difficult day, I can call up a girlfriend and say, "Hey, could you give me a hand on Friday? I just want to go spend a few hours by myself. I'm going to go to the library. I'm going to go get a cup of coffee." I think so much of it is knowing yourself and then also, like I said before, you've got to know why you're doing what you're doing.

It's just like when parenting is difficult and we have difficult days or marriage is difficult, which means that sometimes you take a step back. When I wrote my book, Jay homeschooled for me. I couldn't do both things and I looked at him one day and I said, "I'm going to burn out. I can't do this and this," and fortunately because of what the Lord's asked us to do, he's in a position to be able to do that. And I'll tell you, it was an eye-opener for him.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, yeah.

Heidi St. John: Yeah. I came home from writing because I would write eight hours a day and I'd come home at the end of the day and one time I came home and he said, "How have you been doing this for nine years? This is so hard." And it reminded me and I told him, I was like, "Oh boy, I understand." We had to sit down and say, "What's going to work for us? What can we do? What can we not do?" You can't do it all. And so for you to look at me and say, "You're Superwoman," ask my children, they'll tell you I'm decidedly not Superwoman. I highly recommend by the way, having older children. Our kids are almost 19 now, 16, 13, and they're wonderful help around the house and it took me a long time to get to that point, so I have more help now than I had before and I had to adjust as I went along and when things don't work, stop doing them.

Step back, say, "What is it that's frustrating me?" You can usually trace it to something. If you don't have enough time, I told my children, "I'm going to homeschool you. We're going to start at 9:00 in the morning and at 2:00 mom is done. So if you're not done at 2:00, you're going to have to come back to me like every other child in the United States at 7:00 when it's time for homework and you'll have to finish that day's assignment, but I need from 2:00 to 6:00 to go shopping or get laundry done or whatever it is." I had to come up with a schedule and my kids will tell you, one year that schedule will work and one year it won't work, and so I'll have to redo it again and go back to what works. It's constantly adjusting and not being rigid.

You've got to be flexible and the other thing is to listen to your children. If your kids are frustrated and they're frustrated by me or they're frustrated by what we're learning, I want to listen to them so we can adjust it. You got to find out what works for your family, what works for your kids, what makes their eyes light up. When you sit down and read something to them, if you are not interested, you think it's boring and dull, I can guarantee your kid's going to think it's boring and dull because you've got nothing to pass on to them. But if you can find out what is exciting to you and then translate that into your homeschooling, the benefits are absolutely phenomenal.

Jay St. John: And I want to encourage the dads out there again for that role that you can play in sitting down with your wife at the beginning of the year, working through what are we going to do this year, praying about it, and then helping her hold onto that resolve because it is a resolve that you both have to have, but as the husband, you have to be very sensitive and paying close attention to how she's

doing because if she's done, you need to be able to say, "Okay, what can we do to help change this?" Many of the things Heidi's just shared.

Dr. James Dobson: Heidi, you have said twice that the new or prospective homeschool mom has to answer the question, "Why am I doing this?" You said it in the first program, you just said it a minute ago. What's your reason? Why did you do it? What should be the reason for homeschooling?

Heidi St. John: I think the reason that we do it is because the Lord had impressed upon Jay and I that education is discipleship, and we recognized through that that there was so much more at stake than just who's going to teach our children math and reading and grammar, that we had an opportunity as their parents to impart a biblical worldview to them and nothing does that like spending time with your kids. And so as we looked at the alternatives, and there are a lot of them, as we looked at them, we realized that for the goal that Jay and I had for our family and for our children, if we wanted to spend time with them and really help them be equipped to deal with the culture, I believe passionately and so does Jay, that the times we're living in are so difficult and frightening. Our children are going to have to be able to stand.

We want them to know why they believe what they believe and when we're homeschooling them, we have got hours every day to impart those values to them. We'll watch the news together in the morning or in the evening and we can incorporate that into our schooling. It's an amazing opportunity. And so when it gets difficult, Jay will say to me, "Okay, bad day or bad week, or maybe a bad month," but we'll come back to why are we doing what we're doing because we want our kids at the end of the day and we're seeing this bear out now in the lives of our older children, when they leave our home to know who they are, to know who they are in Christ, to be able to defend their position to the world that they live in and be able to have it be based biblically, the best opportunity for us to do that is to homeschool them.

Dr. James Dobson: Heidi, as difficult as it has been at times with six kids and now seven soon, as you look back on all that effort and all those tears along the way, the struggle of the whole thing, do you regret a single day of it?

Heidi St. John: No, no, no. And our daughter, as she graduated from high school, we just had a ceremony for her. There were actually several lots of homeschool graduates actually, and the way that we did it was we walked up one side of the stage and she came up the other side in her cap and gown and she read a thank you letter to her dad and I. The graduates read a letter to their parents, and then the parents were able to read a blessing to their children. It was powerful. It was so powerful. And when we gave her her diploma, which was a wonderful opportunity for us to say, "We release you, we recognize that you've accomplished this goal in your life," and when I went to hug her, I said, "Please don't go." She's a beautiful young woman, and we cried. She goes, "Mom, thank you for all the sacrifices," because when they get older, they recognize it is a sacrifice. She's looking at homeschooling her own children someday and she

recognizes the sacrifice that we've put into, but so worth it, so worth it. I wouldn't change a thing.

I think it's really important that when you start out surround yourself by people who are like-minded, who are going to speak life into your life and not become isolated because it's a killer of homeschooling families when a mom feels like I'm going to take this on all by myself and on the days that are difficult, if she doesn't have that support system and a network around her of someone who understands and understands but also can continue to encourage her inner her homeschooling rather than calling up a relative who already thinks you're crazy for doing it, so you call that person up and you're like, "I'm having a bad day," and they're like, "Well, of course you are. Any sane person would've put their kid in school by now." That's not what you need. You need to be surrounded by people who understand why you're doing it and then lean back into those people.

We have encouraged moms for over 10 years now, find a local group and then get plugged in. That's what First Class Homeschool Ministries does is we're creating communities of homeschoolers all over the United States so that when they have those issues, they have those frustrating days, they can get life spoken to them by another mom or when they see that happening conversely to someone else, they can go, "Oh man, I've been where you are. It's all right. You're going to make it. Come down out of your tree and let's go have a cup of coffee." That support is really crucial.

- Dr. James Dobson: Boy, our time is gone. It is just amazing. I had probably a hundred or more questions here.
- Heidi St. John: Well, we can come back.
- Dr. James Dobson: I know our listeners would love to hear you answer, but Jay, you were a pastor. You were on somebody's payroll.
- Jay St. John: Yes.
- Dr. James Dobson: And you stepped down from that.
- Jay St. John: Yes.
- Dr. James Dobson: And obviously Heidi, you're not working outside the home.
- Heidi St. John: That's right.
- Dr. James Dobson: And how in the world did you guys make it and what do you say to those who are out there saying, "We're just barely getting by on two incomes. How would we do this?"

Jay St. John: Well, we talk to families all the time who have that concern. It's actually a big deal in California because their standard of living is so high that many people don't want to homeschool because that usually requires one person to not go to work, and so they don't do it. Well, there's actually a wonderful family. I wish I could remember their names in California, he's a pastor and they moved there and they said, "We are going to continue homeschooling even though we know the cost of living is higher and then it'll be harder," and she tells us, "You tell everyone that God will provide for you."

Heidi St. John: Absolutely.

Jay St. John: If you trust God to take care of you, to follow Him and raise your kids to love and follow Him with all your heart and soul, He will provide, He will take care of those things. And we are living testimony of that because we have had many months we've gotten to the last day of the month and realized there's not enough money for the rest of the month.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, there are necessities that you have to think about. Healthcare is one of them with six kids, and so how do you handle those things that take money and you don't have enough of it? How have you all dealt with that?

Heidi St. John: That's a really great question. Something that we've learned through homeschooling because I no longer work outside of our home, is that we have to very carefully budget for everything that we know is necessary for our family. So healthcare, we budget for food. We're budgeting for our school supplies. We budget for curriculum. It's really forced us, and a lot of times we're working with our older children so that they can see what it takes to live simply so that the mom can stay home. It's been a great opportunity actually for us to learn about provision and then learn how to make what God's given us, extend to the areas that we need it to.

We simplified and the Lord provides miraculously. It's amazing.

Jay St. John: And our kids watch us go through that and watch us pray and then watch God provide in miraculous ways that no one could argue, and then they learn from that. It's hugely important.

Dr. James Dobson: I saw it with my folks and it had an amazing impact on me. I don't want to overstate this principle that you talked about, but that's where we are in Family Talk. We started a ministry on an absolute shoestring and Shirley and I provided the money to get started, but we're depending on the Lord too.

Heidi St. John: It's exciting. It's exciting because He'll bless it. I think He blesses that step of faith and just going, "Lord, we see that you are doing something and so we're going to follow where You're leading." And then watching Him bring that provision every month when you don't know exactly where it's coming from. One day Jay said to me, we're driving up to Seattle to speak and we weren't sure

if we were going to have enough money to pay our house payment. And I was stressing. I mean, I don't mind telling you. I was really stressing, and Jay said, "I wonder if maybe what the Lord's trying to teach us is instead of stressing about where it's coming from, to just go, Lord, you have proven yourself faithful over and over again, and we're thanking you before we even get it because we know it's coming and we know it's going to be amazing because it's going to have to be, and so thank you for what You're doing."

And boy, I'll tell you what, the very next day, the most amazing things started happening, and we're seeing that just that step of faith, walking out and just saying, "Lord, we know that wherever you you're leading, you're also going to provide." It's amazing what's happening here at Family Talk for the same reason.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I saw it as a child. My dad had a soft heart and a soft touch, and anybody who needed anything, he would give it to him. He was a minister and evangelist, and he would go someplace to speak for 10 days, and at the end of that time, they'd give him a little meager check. Those little churches didn't have anything, and he would notice that the pastor's kids didn't have shoes or had holes in their shoes or didn't have a coat for winter, and he would give it back, and then he would come home and my mother would ask, "What'd they pay you," and he would smile and she'd say, "I know you gave it away, didn't you?" Then we'd run out of money and we would just go to our knees and it came over and over. One time it was \$1,200. It came on a Monday after we'd prayed that prayer on the weekend.

Heidi St. John: Isn't that amazing?

Dr. James Dobson: And that was a lot of money when I was a kid, but the Lord was there. He was faithful.

Heidi St. John: Amazing.

Dr. James Dobson: And he's getting us through this period too.

Heidi St. John: It's exciting. It's an exciting time. Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: At one point a few minutes ago, I talked about the fact that we had so much more to talk about and you muttered, "Have us back." Guess what?

Heidi St. John: Yay.

Dr. James Dobson: We would like you to come.

Heidi St. John: We'd be thrilled to do that.

Dr. James Dobson: And next time I'd like to talk about your book, Heidi, *Romance: Nurturing Your Marriage Through the Homeschool Years*, and there's a lot there we can talk about because I would get... oh yeah, you just pointed to the subtitle.

Heidi St. John: The whole title.

Dr. James Dobson: *The Busy Homeschool Mom's Guide to-*

Heidi St. John: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: *Romance*. And you guys had your struggles with that, didn't you?

Heidi St. John: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: At times you felt lonely, at times you felt that you were just not having your needs met, and you were wondering, Jay, where your wife had gone and you guys found an answer to that and it's in this book and people can get the book, but I would like you to come back and tell us about it. Would you do that?

Heidi St. John: Love to do that. Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: We loved having you here and what you've heard in these two days is the very best of the ideas that are out there. And we do hope to see you again.

Heidi St. John: Thank you.

Jay St. John: Thank you.

Roger Marsh: Well, I hope you've been encouraged by the conversation we've heard today here on Family Talk featuring Dr. James Dobson and his guests, Jay and Heidi St. John. This was actually part two of a two-part conversation we've aired over the past couple of days here on the program. Whether or not you have kids in public school or private school or if they're being homeschooled, we pray that this program has been an encouragement to you. Now, if you'd like to learn more about the St. Johns or their ministry called Firmly Planted Family or Heidi's ministry, Faith That Speaks, visit our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk and click the link at the bottom of the page. As parents, you know the culture around us has a huge impact on your kids, and unfortunately, it's had a significant erosion of its spiritual and moral foundation as well. Here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we recently launched the new Dobson Culture Center.

The purpose of the DCC is to equip believers to distinguish biblical truth from the enemy's lies, to be able to stand for the sanctity of all human life, to celebrate it, honor marriages, and to nurture families that are the cornerstone of our nation. Leading the charge in this fight is Dr. Owen Strachan, the new senior director of the Dobson Culture Center. He's also the senior fellow of the

Center for Biblical Worldview at the Family Research Council. Dr. Strachan earned his Ph.D. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and he's also a husband and father. If you'd like to stay up to date on important content and information from the Dobson Culture Center, sign up for the free weekly newsletter. It's called Lighting Up Culture, and you can do that when you go to the link at the bottom of today's broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

By the way, you can also access our culture center when you go to drjamesdobson.org/culture-center. Now with election 2024 on the horizon less than two months away as a matter of fact, you need to know who to vote for and quite frankly, why it's important for Christians to vote in the first place. Go to our new site for the Countdown to Decision 2024 today and watch impactful videos featuring Eric Metaxas, Kirk Cameron, Dr. Del Tackett and Riley Gaines and more, hosted by Joseph Backholm and Alison Centofante. You can access our new Election Central when you go to drjamesdobson.org/countdown-to-decision-2024. Now, strong families start with strong marriages of course. The question we have to ask is, is your marriage where you want it to be or is it not quite where it should be?

Perhaps you want a little more time and connection with your spouse. Well, here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we have a great resource to share with you. It's Dr. Dobson's popular book entitled, *Night Light for Couples* co-authored with his wife, Shirley. This devotional is filled with insightful content for couples to discuss every night, a nighttime devotional, if you will, right before you call it a day. All throughout the book, Dr. and Mrs. Dobson address tough marital subjects like finances, communication, intimacy, and more. To rekindle closeness in your relationship, use this helpful resource and we'll be happy to send you a copy of *Night Light for Couples* by Dr. James Dobson and his wife Shirley as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in support of the ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute today. So click the link at the bottom of today's broadcast page when you go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk or remember, you can also give a gift over the phone when you call 877-732-6825.

Now as we conclude today's program, a reminder that if you receive value from the broadcast here at the JDFI, our podcast and also the flagship Family Talk program, why not consider partnering with us to help strengthen families all over the world? One great way to do so of course, is to pray, another is by making a financial contribution. Your tax-deductible donation right now will help us to equip parents, educate kids, and to strengthen marriages and families the world over. You can make a donation online at drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org or give a gift over the phone when you call 877-732-6825, and for your convenience, you can also mail your donation through the U.S. Postal Service. Our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code 80949.

Once again, that ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code 80949. I'm Roger Marsh praying that you enjoy the rest of your day and have a peaceful, relaxing weekend. Blessings to you and your family from all of us here at the JDFI, and be sure to join us again Monday for another brand new edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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