



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** The Dobsons: A Marriage Made in Heaven – Part 1

**Guest(s):** Shirley 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 in case you had not heard, this past Thursday, August the 21st, in the early morning hours of that day, Dr. James Dobson entered into eternity. He left this life in exchanging his life on earth for eternal life with the Lord in Heaven. We are deeply saddened, of course by his passing at the tender age of 89, but we are grateful for the life and dynamic legacy of Dr. James Dobson that continues even this day through the James Dobson Family Institute.

On today's edition of the broadcast, we not only remember Dr. Dobson's life and legacy, with a classic program that you will definitely want to hear, but also, we commemorate the fact that today would have been Dr. James Dobson and Shirley Dobson's 65th wedding anniversary. And so in light of this auspicious occasion and as we remember the legacy of Dr. James Dobson, we get to hear a bit of a farewell address from Doctor from a turning point in his ministry that happened about 15 years ago, right before the start of Family Talk. You'll hear that reference in today's program. But also for a new season in life where he turned the spotlight onto his wife, Shirley, and offered a beautiful homage of love to her, a tribute to her if you will, for being by his side through all of the ups and downs of leading a ministry. Now in this touching presentation, you're going to hear Dr. Dobson share an intimate letter that he wrote to Shirley during a Marriage Encounter weekend all the way back in 1979. At the time, his ministry was just beginning its explosive growth and the pressures were mounting. The letter he penned that day captures not just their personal journey together, but also the very essence of what makes marriage a sacred covenant. From their humble beginnings as newlyweds to budding a ministry that would touch millions of families worldwide, the Dobsons love story is truly one that spans decades and is a love for the ages. Let's listen now to the unforgettable celebration of love here on Family Talk. It's a presentation we've entitled "The Dobsons: A Marriage Made in Heaven."

Dr. James Dobson: Thank you everybody. You are very kind to us. Okay, everybody. Oh, that is so very kind. H.B., I didn't know that video thing was going to be an hour and a half long, so I don't know. Lunch is gone and everything else. Oh my goodness, what

an overwhelming day this has been. All those very kind words and all those nice things that people said, and you know that Shirley and I will cherish those comments forever, but I do have to tell you that I am a little embarrassed by it all because the Lord and I have a little secret and I know that He knows that I didn't do it. I'm not responsible for this place. I didn't even know what God was doing for at least 20 years. I didn't figure out what was happening for 20 years, and He has chosen to bless this for His own purposes and one of the ways He's done it is with all of you and with this great board.

And so for us to receive these accolades is a wonderful expression of friendship and I appreciate it, but you have to take it with that understanding that we recognize that this is overstated because the Lord has done a wonderful thing here. Pat, you talked about Winston Churchill's quote. The one that seems to make sense to me today, and I didn't think about that until just a minute ago, is when the British were desperate for a win in World War II and they had finally beaten a German army in North Africa. You'll remember what I'm talking about, and he came home and there were all these crowds there congratulating the British army. What he was saying is that we got a long ways to go and I feel that way about you and I feel that way about us. I feel like this is just the end of the beginning.

It's not the end. The Lord has made it very clear He is got something He wants us to do in the form of a new radio program. Some of you are aware that we're going to do that. The title of it is Family Talk, but you know what? The time is so short. I had so many things I wanted to say to you, and H.B. just used it all up and he said there at the end he wanted to cut and slash and guess who got cut and slashed. Thanks a lot H.B., appreciate that kindness. I don't want to forget to say this to the board of directors that we're starting a little ministry like we did in 1977 we're right back where we began. Some of you may be aware that Tyndale House publishers who are represented here today by Doug Knox gave us a \$35,000 gift to help us get started.

That's how we got this thing off the ground in return for a book, which turned out to be *The Strong-Willed Child*. And so we're starting at ground zero again and this represents today a culmination, a turning point in our lives, and it is particularly meaningful because of you and your predecessors and those that we have come to know here. When Paul wrote the book of Colossians, he named the people, it sounds like "My Big Fat Greek Wedding." It's just a bunch of Greek names that he put down there because that's what was important to him. People were important and they're important to me, and if I'd had time and H.B. hadn't used it all up, I would have told you about some of the people and some of the stories. We're only four minutes over? I'm just getting started. That was my introduction.

Okay, I'm going to jump to the end now and I'm going to thank someone that you would not be surprised that I would feel very strongly about because this lady right here has stood with me as she is everything you think she is, but she's

also a little more. You think you know her entirely, but there's an aspect of her you don't know. What's her name?

Audience: Shirley.

Dr. James Dobson: Shirley, who's she named for? You got it right. Shirley Temple. Shirley's mom had an obsession for Shirley Temple and she was determined to make Shirley into Shirley Temple, so she had little curls all over her head. That should have been something to behold. Her mother sent her to dancing lessons and to singing lessons. What I'm going to tell you right now is the most guarded secret in the whole country because I mean the hydrogen bomb formula is not guarded as much as what I'm about to tell you. Shirley can tap dance. She can tap dance. And we're going to have some fun. Okay, we might as well have some fun.

Shirley Dobson: Oh no we're not.

Dr. James Dobson: When we were in college, Shirley tap danced and sang for me like Shirley Temple and someday she will tap dance for you, but she's got on heels and she probably won't do it today, but she is a great lady and I want to, I don't care if we are late, I'm going to read something to you. This was written to Shirley by me in 1979 and at that time, Focus was just getting started and I mean there was pressure on us like you can't believe everything just exploded and mail was coming, phone calls and radio stations were calling and adding our program. It was really quite overwhelming and when you get that busy, you don't have a lot of time for each other. And somebody suggested that we go to a Marriage Encounter event and it was just what we needed. It was a wonderful, I don't know if you've ever heard of it or ever been to a Marriage Encounter, but it made a tremendous impression on both of us and one of the assignments at Marriage Encounter that weekend was for us to go into separate rooms and write a letter to one another addressing the subject, why do I want to continue living with you?

And we had no idea what was about to happen to us emotionally, but this is the letter that I wrote to Shirley. It's been shared a time or two on the radio, but maybe you haven't heard it. I said, "Who else shares the memory of my youth during which the foundations of love were laid? I asked you who else could occupy the place that has been reserved for the only woman who was there when I graduated from college and went to the army and returned as a student at USC and bought my first decent car and promptly wrecked it and picked out an inexpensive wedding ring with you and paid for it with savings bonds. And we prayed and we thank God for what we had. Then we said the wedding vows and my dad prayed, 'Lord, you gave us Jimmy and Shirley as infants to love and cherish and raise for a season, and tonight we give them back to you as our labor of love, not as two separate individuals but as one.'

And everyone cried. Then we left for the honeymoon and spent all our money and came home to an apartment full of rice and we had only just begun. You

taught the second grade and I taught and fell in love with a bunch of sixth graders and especially a kid named Norbert. Wonder where he is today. And I earned a master's degree and passed the comprehensive exams for a doctorate and we bought our first little home and remodeled it and I dug up all the grass in the front yard and buried it when a 10 foot hole, which later sank and looked like two graves in the front yard and while spreading the dirt to make a new lawn, I accidentally planted 8 million ash trees in the front yard and discovered two weeks later that we had a forest growing between our house and the street.

You delivered our very own baby and we loved her half to death and named her Danae Ann and built a room on our little bungalow and gradually filled it with furniture. Then I joined the staff of Children's Hospital and I did well there and still didn't have enough money to pay our USC tuition and other expenses, so we sold and ate a Volkswagen. Then I earned a Ph.D. and we cried and we thanked God for what we had. In 1970, we brought home a little boy, named him James Ryan and loved him half to death and didn't sleep for six months. And I labored over a manuscript titled Dare to something or other and then reeled backward under a flood of favorable responses and a few not so favorable responses and received a small royalty check and thought it was a fortune. And I joined a faculty at USC School of Medicine and did well there.

Soon I found myself pacing the halls of Huntington Memorial Hospital as a team of grim faced neurologists examined...You didn't know about this one, examined your nervous system for evidence of a hypothalamic tumor. And I prayed and I begged God to let me complete my life with my best friend and He finally said yes for now, and we cried and thanked Him for what we had. We bought a new house and promptly tore it to shreds and went skiing in Vail, Colorado and tore your leg to shreds. And I called your mom to report the accident and she tore me to shreds and our toddler Ryan tore the whole town of Arcadia to shreds and the construction on our house seemed to go on forever. And you stood in the shattered living room and cried every Saturday night because so little had been accomplished in the worst of the mess.

A hundred friends gave us a surprise housewarming, and they slopped through the debris and the mud and the sawdust and the cereal bowls and sandwich parts. And the next morning you groaned and asked, did it really happen? And I published a new book called *Hide or Seek*. What? And everyone called it Hide and Seek and the publisher sent us to Hawaii and we stood on the balcony overlooking the bay and thank God for what we had. We published *What Wives Wish* and people liked it and the honors rolled in and the speaking requests arrived by the hundreds. Then you underwent risky surgery and I said, 'Lord, not now.' And the doctor said, no cancer. And we cried and thanked God for what we had. Then I started a radio program and took a leave of absence from Children's Hospital and opened a little office in Arcadia and called it Focus on the Family, which a 3-year-old radio listener called Pocus in the Fanny and we got more visible. Then we went to Kansas City for a family vacation and my dad prayed on the last day and said, 'Lord, we know it can't always be is the

wonderful way it is now, but we thank you for the love we enjoy today.' A month later, he experienced his heart attack and in December I said goodbye to my gentle friend and you put your arm around me and said, 'I'm hurting with you.'

And I cried and said, I love you. And we invited my mother to spend six weeks with us during her recuperative period and the three of us endured the loneliest Christmas of our lives as the empty chair and the missing place setting reminded us of his red sweater and dominoes and apples and a stack of sophisticated books and a little dog named Benji who always sat on his lap. But life went on. My mother staggered to get herself back together and she couldn't and she lost 15 pounds and moved to California and still ached for her missing friend. And more books were written and more honors arrived and we became better known and our influence spread and we thanked God for what we had. And our daughter went into adolescence and this great authority on children knew he was inadequate and found himself asking God to help him with the awesome task of parenting.

And He did. And we thanked Him for sharing his wisdom with us. And then a little dog named Siggy who was sort of a dachshund, grew old and toothless and we had to let the vet do his thing and a 15 year love affair between a man and a dog ended with a whimper, but a pup named Mindy showed up at the front door and life went on. Then a series of films were produced in San Antonio, Texas, and our world turned upside down as we were thrust into the fishbowl and pocus in the fanny expanded in new directions and life got busier and more hectic and time became more precious. And then someone invited us to a Marriage Encounter weekend where I sit at this moment. So I ask you, who's going to take your place in my life? You have become me and I've become you.

We are inseparable. I've now spent 46% of my life with you and I can't even remember much of the first 54. Not one of the experiences I've listed can be comprehended anyone but the woman who lived through them with me. Those days are gone, but the aroma lingers on in our minds and with every event during these 21 years, now 50, our lives have become more intertwined, blending eventually into this incredible affection that I bear for you today. Is it any wonder that I can read your face like a book when we're in a crowd? The slightest narrowing of your eyes speaks volumes to me about the thoughts that are running through your conscience experience as you open Christmas presents. I know instantly if you like the color or style of the gift because your feelings cannot be hidden from me. I love you SMD, remember the monogram shirt?

I love the girl who believed in me before I believed in myself. I love the girl who never complained about huge school bills and books and hot apartments and rented junkie furniture and no vacations and humble little Volkswagens. You have been with me encouraging me, loving me, and supporting me since August 27th, 1960, and the status that you've given me in our home is beyond what I have deserved. So why do I want to go on living? It's because I have you to make

the journey with. Otherwise, why take the trip? The half-life that lies ahead promises to be tougher than the years behind us.

It's in the nature of things that my mom will someday join my father and then she will be laid to rest beside him in Olathe, Kansas, which has occurred overlooking a wind-swept hill from once he walked with Benji and recorded a cassette tape for me describing the beauty of that spot. Then we'll have to say goodbye to your mom and dad. Gone will be the table games we've played and the ping pong and the lawn darts and Joe's laughter and Alma's wonderful ham dinners and her underlined birthday cards and the little yellow house in Long Beach. Everything within me screams no, but my dad's final prayer is still valid. We know it can't always be the way it is now. When the time comes, our childhoods will then be severed and cut off by the passing of the beloved parents who bore us. What then, my sweet wife? To whom will I turn for solace and comfort?

To whom can I say I'm hurting and know that I'm understood in more than an abstract manner? To whom can I turn when the summer leaves begin to change colors and fall to the ground? How much... you all have to forgive me? How much have I enjoyed the springtime and the warmth of the summer sun? The flowers and the green grass and the blue sky and the clear streams have been savored to their fullest, but alas, autumn is coming. Even now I can feel a little nip in the air and I try not to look at a distant lone cloud that passes near the horizon. I must face the fact that winter lies ahead with its ice and sleet and snow to pierce us through. But in this instance, winter will not be followed by springtime except in the glory of the life to come.

With whom then will I spend that final season of my life? None but you, Shirls. The only joy of the future will be in experiencing it as we have the last 21 years hand in hand with the one I love, a young miss named Shirley Deere who gave me everything she had, including her, including her heart. Thank you, Shirls, for making this journey with me. Let's finish it together.

I apologize. I did not expect that to happen to me, but it sort of fits with the emotion of where we are today. I love you all. I'm grateful for the time we've spent together and the end is not yet.

Roger Marsh:

Very tender and poignant words from Dr. James Dobson recorded about 15 years ago as he and his wife, Shirley, were transitioning from one large ministry that they had founded, beginning the ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute and Family Talk. And through tears and laughter, triumphant loss, the Dobsons showed us the true love isn't just found in fairytales. It's definitely forged in the everyday moments of choosing each other again and again and again. I'm Roger Marsh. And today on a special edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we've been enjoying this deeply personal moment that Dr. Dobson shared when he honored his wife, Shirley, during a historic celebration 15 years ago. That letter he shared, by the way, was written during a Marriage Encounter weekend. At that time, it was four decades prior and it reminds us that strong

marriages aren't built on perfection, but on shared memories, mutual sacrifice and unwavering commitment.

Now, we would appreciate if you'd keep Shirley Dobson in your prayer as James Dobson, of course, went home to be with the Lord this past Thursday, August the 21st at the age of 89. Today would've marked the Dobson's 65th wedding anniversary. And as a tribute to Doctor and Mrs. Dobson, we've put together a special commemorative CD of the broadcast you're listening to today and tomorrow's program as well. It's called "The Dobsons: A Marriage Made in Heaven." We'll be happy to send you a copy of that recording as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount. In support of the ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. For decades, the Dobsons poured their lives into strengthening families through biblical truth. And when you support the JDFI, you're helping us continue the Dobson's lifelong mission of defending the sanctity of marriage, protecting children, and promoting biblical truth.

Now, to make a donation and to request the CD resource, go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). You can also call our constituent care team at 877-732-6825, or if you'd like to send your gift along with a special note of remembrance in honor of the Dobson's 65th wedding anniversary, you can do so when you address your correspondence to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80949.

I'm Roger Marsh inviting you to join us back again next time as you'll hear part two of the special anniversary commemoration as we remember the life of Dr. James Dobson and honor his nearly 65 year marriage to his beloved, Shirley. That's coming up right here on the next edition of 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.