



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: What's It Like Being Married to Me? – Part 1

Guest(s): Linda Dillow

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Dr. James Dobson: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. Have you ever stopped to consider what life is really like for your spouse? Well, today here on Family Talk, you're going to hear Dr. Dobson's insightful conversation with author and speaker, Linda Dillow, who challenges wives everywhere to examine themselves through a powerful lens of self-reflection. Recently, Linda wrote a book that poses one of the most thought-provoking questions a wife can ask herself. And that question is "what's it like to be married to me?" This simple yet profound inquiry can transform marriages when approached with humility and openness to change. Through her own journey, including a life-altering accident that left her with a severe brain injury, Linda discovered profound truths about marriage, selfishness and the differences between husbands and wives.

On today's edition of Family Talk, Dr. Dobson and Linda Dillow will explore why self-examination is crucial for marital growth. They'll also talk about the common pitfalls that trap many wives, and they'll reveal how understanding our God-given differences can lead to deeper intimacy. So right now, let's get into part one of their enlightening discussion on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: We're really fortunate to have Mrs. Linda Dillow with us today. She has been a missionary on three continents, along with her husband, Jody. But Linda, I met you because I interviewed you about 10 years ago or so.

Linda Dillow: We can't be old enough to have been doing something 10 years ago.

Dr. James Dobson: Years are going by in a hurry, I'll tell you that. You have four children.

Linda Dillow: I do.

Dr. James Dobson: And 10 grandchildren.

Linda Dillow: Isn't that a blessing.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, my goodness, what a blessing.

Linda Dillow: It is.

Dr. James Dobson: We've got two, and I'm thankful for both of them. You've written a number of books, including *Intimate Issues*, and that was the book that I interviewed you about. You, also, co-wrote that book with Lorraine Pintus, but there was a time in your life when you weren't sure that you were going to be able to write again. Tell us that story. You really had a bump in the road along the way as an author.

Linda Dillow: Five years ago, Dr. Dobson, I fell down an entire staircase in an airport and landed on my head.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you really?

Linda Dillow: And woke up several hours later in a trauma hospital. This was in southern California, and my husband flew out there and sat by my bed for five days. Doctors said you have a severe brain injury, and for two and a half years after my accident, I had no creative thoughts. It was like my brain needed everything just to try to learn a new way to live life, and two and a half years after my accident, God just began to give me back creative thinking, and He just whispered to me that He wanted me to write on marriage, and I said, "Really, God," and He said, "Yes."

Dr. James Dobson: You have no doubt about the fact that what He gave you to write about here was given to you by Him. The insight came from your spiritual concepts and the biblical ideas, didn't it?

Linda Dillow: It did, and I began asking myself dangerous questions early in our marriage, and God just whispered, "Why don't you ask other women those same questions that you've been asking yourself?"

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I don't want to be too nosy with you, but what conclusions did you draw about yourself and your relationship with your husband when you asked that question, what's it like to be married to me? What did you decide?

Linda Dillow: That is a nosy question, but you can be nosy. You can be nosy. I decided that I was selfish, that I wanted my husband to respond to life like I did, because then life would be easier for me, and I decided that I was prideful, that I felt my way of living life was really better than my husband's. That being structured is really better than being 'flow with it,' because structure makes me feel comfortable, and God just said, "You know, Jody isn't wrong. He's different, and you're not right. You're different, and I want you to accept the differences and even delight in the differences, and allow me to mold you into one flesh."

Dr. James Dobson: I think you've got something here for all of us to come to terms with. But you've already told us in my office a few minutes ago that some women have told you they threw the book away. They wouldn't read it.

Linda Dillow: No. They threw it against a wall and threw it in the trash, because one thing that I did early in my marriage and that I encourage the women to do is to think about who they want to become as a wife. What kind of a wife do you want to be in 20 years or in 30 years, and out of those thoughts and prayers to form a marriage purpose statement, and one of my friends just said, "My marriage is so bad right now, I can't write a statement and say I'm going to try to live this for the rest of my life." So she threw it in the trash, and as we talked, she said, "Okay, I'll ask God what I could live for the next three months." I said, "Well, that's a start. That's a start," and so she wrote a series of 'I will,' 'I will forgive my husband,' because he had done some horrible things. 'I will seek today to love him.' 'I will look at life through his eyes.'"

Then at the bottom of it, she put from January through March 2011. I mean God, you have me for three months, and my husband has me for three months, but do you know, after those three months, she sent me an email and said, "I just added to the bottom of my marriage purpose statement, till death do us part."

So God can get ahold of us when we pray. Really God asks us to ask ourselves dangerous questions. We're to say, "Search me, oh God, and know my heart. Try me and see if there's any wicked way in me." I mean this is what David prayed, and really asking dangerous questions is very biblical.

Dr. James Dobson: Have you ever had a woman say to you, "What if I go on this self-improvement campaign? What if I try to conform myself to Scripture? What if I do everything I can to care for and love my husband, and he doesn't match me on the other side? If there's no change in him, then what happens?"

Linda Dillow: It's a really good question, and there are a lot of women that are in that very place, and what I say to them, Dr. Dobson, is, "I pray, I hope your husband will want to ask God dangerous questions for him, but whether he does or not, there's only one person that each of us can make secret choices for, and that is for me." And I want to be faithful to my God, and when I stand before Him, I want to say, "I did all I could do to be a wife to this man." I can't answer for my husband, but I want to be faithful to God for me.

Dr. James Dobson: What's the difference, and you talk about this in your book, what's the difference in living by default versus living by design?

Linda Dillow: I think what we've been talking about, about getting the gripes out and getting gratitude in shows, "all right, if I'm serious before God and I want to give respect, and praise, and encouragement to my husband," that's living by design.

If I just don't care, I don't ever think about what comes out of my mouth, that's living by default.

Dr. James Dobson: I want to tell you what I was writing. I was trying to answer the question, why do so many women nag, and gripe, and complain? What is there in the female heart that makes that happen so commonly? And I've written down a few possible answers.

Linda Dillow: I'd like to hear those answers.

Dr. James Dobson: I want to know what yours are. The first one is if I don't stay on him, he'll get worse. I'm trying to keep him from becoming intolerable, and I can hardly live with him the way he is now. Second, he could be so much better if he'd only try. I'm going to show him how to do it. Okay? That's two. Three, I am in such pain in this relationship, please, hear my heart. When she says to him, "This is impossible. I can't deal with it. Why don't you change," she is really saying, "I am in agony. I'm going through difficulties, because I'm trying to love you and I'm having a hard time doing it."

Number four, marriage is so different than what I expected it to be. I'm so disappointed with it. Perhaps I can make him what I need him to be. There's four. Yeah. Do you have something to add?

Linda Dillow: I think you should write a book.

Dr. James Dobson: It really comes out of the female heart, out of the sensitivity, and the need for intimacy, and the need for acceptance, and the need for love, and when those needs are not met, the woman cries out for it. So you're really trying to say even though there are these uncomfortable aspects of life as you know it, you can accomplish a lot by listening to the Lord, reading the Scripture, and working on yourself.

Linda Dillow: Right, because we can't work on the other person. I think your answers are good ones, but I'd add what I said God pointed out to me when I seriously looked inside many years ago, and that is that I am selfish and I was prideful. I really thought I knew what was best for my husband, and God's the one who knows what's best for him. We all have a built-in reaction when someone criticizes us, and griping really is criticism, and so we just push back, and then you just have the wife pushing at the husband and the husband pushing back, and the cycle's got to stop.

Dr. James Dobson: One thing is sure. Nagging, and griping, and complaining do not change a man. They make him want to dig in. It makes him angry, and that's not the answer. So there has to be a better way.

Linda Dillow: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: And I think you've hit it. It may not be entirely fair to take all responsibility for your conflicts on yourself. It takes two to tango, and the other side, the husbands have all kinds of flaws, too, and we're acknowledging that. But you've got to start someplace, and thank God it's usually the women that are willing to work on it.

This personal investigation that you're asking women to embark upon, indeed feels quite dangerous, because it goes against human nature to examine ourselves in this way. But I think the Lord can really use it if we're willing to be open to Him and to see what He's saying to us.

So I want to ask you, you are out there, along with Dr. Julie Slattery, speaking a great deal, and you're not only speaking to women, but you're hearing from them. What are they saying to you about this book? Does it offend them? These are dangerous questions. Are people mad at you, and are they saying, "I don't think I can do this?" What are you hearing?

Linda Dillow: Dr. Dobson, I would say the majority are just very, very positive. One woman said recently, "A lot of Christian books are fluff. This isn't fluff, and it makes me think, and I need to think, so thank you for making me think about the hard questions."

I just want women to have hope. I think a lot of women out there are pretty hopeless about marriage, and they look at the very sad statistics that Christian marriages, and as often as marriages of those who aren't Christians, and they just think, "Shouldn't God make a difference," and I believe He does, and I know you all do, too, and we just want to try to pour hope into wives and husbands that no marriage is beyond God's repair, and He's a God who recreates, and He can recreate marriages. I've watched him do it.

I was so excited when I was studying Proverbs 24 where it says, "By wisdom, a house is built and by knowledge, it's established," and that Hebrew word built, it means a recreation. It means to take something that's toppling over and make it stand straight again, and I just got on my knees and said, "God, thank you, because you say by wisdom a house or a house of marriage is built. You can recreate in a couple who is willing," and it would be so wonderful if both the husband and the wife were willing at the same time.

But God only needs one person to start, and so if a wife says, "All right, I'll ask these dangerous questions, and, God, would you change me," my prayer is that her husband would feel loved and respected, and that he would want to change.

But there's another side of this, and that is that the Lord Jesus said, "If you love me, you will show by obeying me," and there is peace that comes in obedience, and if I am saying, "Lord, I want to learn to love like you love," that delights His

heart, but you know what, it, also, gives me peace inside, because I am doing what God has asked me to do.

I have husbands come up to me and they just say, "Thank you, Linda," and particularly about the question "what's it like to make love with me," and that's a question women don't want to ask, but many husband have come up and said, "Thank you. My wife is different because she asked that question."

Dr. James Dobson: You may remember in some of our earlier programs that were addressed in *Bringing Up Girls*. About six months to 18 months of age, there is this hormonal bath that changes the female brain. She will never again be as she was before or as her brother will be. His hormonal bath of testosterone occurred when he was about eight weeks of age, referring to the gestational period, and they will be forever different, and understanding each other is tough. It is hard, because we're made differently literally, and what the girl brain, what the female brain is like after that bath of estrogen is sensitivity, and relationships becoming extremely important, and a desire to be loved, and to be known, and cherished, all of that. A guy grows up not feeling those things.

So it's really strange that the Lord put characteristics within us that both draw us to each other, we can't get along without each other, and yet, there is tension over who we are. That's sort of what you're dealing with here.

Linda Dillow: It is. I think, too, that women are just very idealistic about relationships, and that we think "I've fallen in love with this man."

Dr. James Dobson: He's going to be everything.

Linda Dillow: "He's going to be everything. He's going to fill my love gap that is so big in my heart," and when he doesn't measure up to this idealistic view of who the perfect man was to be everything to us, then we want to change him to become that, because that's what marriage is supposed to be like.

Dr. James Dobson: Linda, you talk in your book about sexual intimacy, and that's a reflection of the differences between men and women, too.

Linda Dillow: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: They have very different concepts of what that experience is to be like, and it behooves both partners to understand the spouse's different needs there. Describe what those needs are.

Linda Dillow: A woman wants a lot of physical touch that isn't sexual. She wants her husband to adore her. She wants relationship before sexual intimacy, whereas a man wants sexual intimacy and then relationship, and a woman absolutely cannot fathom that, because we want to connect, and we connect by talking and

entering into each other's lives, and then I would love to give to you sexually. But for a man, it's exactly the opposite.

You know, God didn't ask my opinion, but if He had, I would have suggested He make us more the same, not different, and yet, He built in the sexual differences between men and women before the fall, and so He obviously thought this was a good way for us to learn to be a servant lover.

I love the way the message translates, 1 Corinthians 7:4. It says that we are to serve one another, whether in bed or out, that we are to learn to look from the other person's perspective, and that God made my husband just the way He did, and God wants me to love him in every way, including physically, and hopefully, he will look at me and see the great need I have for connection and relationship.

Dr. James Dobson: If it does not focus on the other person, it is the ultimately selfish perspective.

Linda Dillow: It is, yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: It's only when you are in tune with the other person's needs that there is a gratification that goes to both partners.

Linda Dillow: That's absolutely true.

Dr. James Dobson: Linda, when we were not on the air, I mentioned to you that books on marriage often lay down the same principles. They're said a different way and with different illustrations, but there's really very little that's entirely new in regard to an institution as old as marriage, which goes back to the Garden of Eden.

You have really provided some food for thought here, and I am enjoying talking to you so much that I really would like to have you back with us. Would you be willing to do that?

Linda Dillow: I would be honored.

Roger Marsh: You know, it takes real courage to ask yourself what it's like to be on the receiving end of your own behavior in marriage, and Linda Dillow's conversation with Dr. James Dobson on today's edition of Family Talk has certainly given us a lot to think about. By the way, if you'd like to hear this conversation again or share it with someone who might benefit from Linda's wisdom, go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. Once you're there, you'll also find information about Linda Dillow's book called *What's It Like to Be Married to Me?* Again you'll find the book information as well as the audio at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

You know, the kind of biblical wisdom we heard on today's Family Talk broadcast is exactly what families need in these challenging times. Right now through next Monday, June 30, you have an extraordinary opportunity to double your impact through a special matching grant. Several generous ministry

partners have stepped forward to match every gift donated throughout the month of June, dollar for dollar. Your support helps the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute continue bringing truth and hope to marriages and families who need encouragement. In a culture's that increasingly hostile toward traditional, biblical values, we are committed to defending the sanctity of marriage and equipping couples with God's design for life-long relationships. Now you can make a secure donation online at drjamesdobson.org. You can also call over the phone with your donation at 877-732-6825.

And as a way of thanking you for your support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute during the month of June, we'll thank you by sending you a copy of Dr. Dobson's powerful book, *Your Legacy*, along with the companion DVD. In this deeply personal resource, Dr. James Dobson shares his own family's spiritual heritage, and provides practical strategies for passing your faith to the next generation. You'll discover how to lead your children to Christ, how to build loving relationships that last, and create a godly legacy even in today's secular driven culture. The companion DVD features Dr. Dobson's dramatic presentation and will challenge and inspire you to be intentional about your family's spiritual journey. Now you can request your copy of this special bundle featuring the book, *Your Legacy*, and the companion DVD when you contact us online at drjamesdobson.org. You can also call 877-732-6825. Or you can write to us. Send your tax-deductible donation through the mail to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk P.O. Box 39000 Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code, 80949.

And by the way, in less than two weeks' time, we'll be celebrating our nation's 249th birthday. That's why I encourage you before we leave the air for the day to drop by our website at drjamesdobson.org and sign up for our exclusive "Faith of Our Founders" email series. You'll discover the profound role that faith played in America's founding, and learn how our nation's architects believed that God is the creator of our liberty. Now these inspiring messages will strengthen your understanding of our Judeo-Christian heritage and why it matters even more so today. To sign up for the free "Faith of Our Founders" email series, go to drjamesdobson.org.

Well I'm Roger Marsh and on behalf of Dr. James Dobson and all of us here at the JDFI, thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time when we'll hear the conclusion of Dr. Dobson's enlightening conversation with Linda Dillow, asking the question every wife really wants to ask her husband, "What's it like being married to me?" Until then, may God continue to bless you and your family. Be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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