



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Raising Boys: Routine Panic – Part 1

Guest(s): Dr. James Dobson

Air Date: August 17, 2026

- 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 division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and today marks the beginning of a somber week of broadcasts here at the JDFI and the Family Talk program. It was on August 21st, 2025, that Dr. James Dobson went home to be with the Lord at the age of 89. And as we anticipate marking that special day, which will be coming up with a special Family Talk broadcast this Friday, August the 21st, this week, we're dedicating our programming to some of Dr. Dobson's favorite broadcasts and also some memories from his memorial service last October. Today, we begin a two-part conversation on a topic that was very near to Dr. Dobson's heart, the bond between a father and his son. It's really unlike any other. As much as a mother gives, there are lessons a boy can only learn from his dad, like how to work and how to lead and how to become a man of character. And when that relationship is missing, the wound can run very deep. Today on Family Talk, we're bringing you a classic presentation from Dr. James Dobson's "Bringing Up Boys" series. Dr. Dobson will be exploring why fathers are so essential to a boy's development, sharing biblical wisdom alongside a few humorous and even hair-raising stories from his own young adulthood. These words were recorded some time ago, but the truths that they espouse remain just as practical for parents today. So let's get right to this timeless conversation on today's special edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.
- Dr. James Dobson: Well, we have been talking about bringing up boys, the subject from my book, been talking about how they are unique, how they think, how to raise them properly, and how to make the most of their masculinity, how to help boys know that they are men or can become men. And it's a very important subject and one that I really enjoy talking about. I loved writing this book, but it's also a fun topic to deal with. Now, what I want to do today is talk about the adolescent experience and how it relates, especially to their fathers. We'll start there and then go on from that point to talk about the relationship with their mothers.
- When I was 17 years of age, my father bought a new car. It's a big deal in our family. It was a big deal in our little town. Bought a 1953 Ford. It was beautiful. It was blue-green. I loved that car and my dad allowed me to drive it one day, which was a mistake. I was 17-years-old, haven't been driving very long, and it

was lunchtime, and I asked him if I could take it to go get something to eat, and he said yes. So I took off and I went to eat. And when I was coming back, I noticed that my fellow students were on the street. It was lunchtime, and so there were a lot of kids out there, and this gave me a great opportunity to show off. And I just thought it would be also a great opportunity for me to test a theory about physics that I had always wanted to investigate.

See, I had seen a guy named Joey Chitwood at the state fair. Joey was the Evel Knievel of that day, and he was flying through the air with his cars, and that seemed like a pretty neat thing to me. And I figured that I might get that car off the ground, too, if I did it right. And in our little town, there were two big bumps at the corners to accommodate the flash floods that came through town. And I thought if I hit those fast enough, I would fly over them. It made sense. Joey did it, why couldn't I do it? And so I backed up about three blocks, and I mean, these things were about three feet deep. They were big bumps on both sides.

And so I got going about 60 miles-an-hour and I hit that first bump. And I'm telling you, my head went into the headboard and the whole car convulsed. I mean, the front and the back hit the bottom, and then I careened into the second bump and kaboom. It hit again. I mean, it shocked me. I had no idea that was going to happen. The whole car shuttered and my Texas friends were awestruck. That was about the neatest thing they ever saw but I sure shook up that car and shook myself up pretty good. And I went on home and left the car in the driveway and didn't say anything, obviously. Didn't tell my dad about this.

About, oh, I suppose two weeks later, my dad came to me and he said, Bo, which is what he called me when he was pretty serious. He says, "Bo, I just took the car in, had it checked, had it serviced, and all four shocks are blown." He said, "These things are shredded." And he says, "It's a new car and shocks usually wear out a little bit at a time. They're all gone. They're just absolutely shredded. Do you have any idea how this might've happened?" The only thing that saved me was that for a split second, I couldn't remember having done that. So I said no. And he accepted that. And then about two weeks later, I got in the car and I was driving off. I went a short distance and the steering post broke off and the steering wheel had no relationship to the wheels at all. And I went into a curb and bounced over the curb. If I'd have been going faster, I could have killed somebody, namely me. And that was strange. A new car, why would that happen? And it was several months before I let myself remember that I not only blew those four shocks, but I probably cracked the steering post on that new Ford and who knows how else I messed up my dad's car on that occasion.

Now, by the time I figured out that I had done it, the statute of limitations had run on the crime and I didn't see any reason to bring it up again. And my dad never asked me again. And he went to his grave not knowing that I had destroyed his new car. So dad, if you're up there, I'm really sorry and I won't ever do it again, and you can have my allowance for the next 20 years. Boys have an ability to frustrate the very souls of their dads. And yet, and yet never

has it been more clear than it is right now that fathers, and if not fathers, a father substitute, are absolutely critical to the health and well-being and the development of boys. Yes, they frustrate us. They lose our cameras, they drop our binoculars, they mess up our work benches, and they frustrate us in a lot of ways, but they are critically important.

Now, in the 1950s, it was believed that poverty caused juvenile delinquency, gang behavior, young violence and other things. It was thought that that came from poverty. That is now discredited, that's no longer believed. It's now realized that the primary problem with juvenile delinquency, and I used to serve on a commission on juvenile delinquency at the request of President Reagan, so I've spent a lot of time studying this. It is now known that juvenile delinquency and all of the violence and gang behavior and everything else is caused primarily by the absence of fathers. And in this culture today, that is the case. That's what's happening.

Now, why are fathers so important? The reason is because of male role modeling obviously. A woman cannot teach a boy what it means to be a man. A man has to do that job, one who is committed to that lad, to that boy. He needs to teach him character. He needs to teach him how to work. He needs to teach him how to live an honest life, to be a man of his own word and needs to teach himself discipline. Those things are best taught by a man in a relationship with his son.

There are four things that a father needs to teach his son about the future responsibility he will hold as an adult, particularly if he is in a family situation. All four of these are controversial. All four of them are under attack. There's been great consternation over these four principles, these four understandings, and yet all four of them are linked to Scripture. You can find every one of them in Scripture. And the first is that a boy needs to understand that he is to be the provider for his family. Now, that does not mean that his wife may not work. She may make more than he, but the primary responsibility for the provision of his family, for the material needs that his family has rests with the male, the father, the husband in the relationship.

And this again, is controversial and young people don't know this, many young people don't. But it is very common today for a guy to drive over and pick up a girl. He may not call before he chooses to come over. He may honk the horn and she comes out and they go out to eat or go to a show or whatever they're going to do, and he expects her to pay for it. That's not the way it's supposed to work. And you need to teach your sons that that's not the way they're supposed to work. The guy is supposed to care for and provide for the girl and later his wife.

The second is the matter of protection. Now, here we get into another very archaic notion. But let me tell you the way I was raised, when I was with a girl on a date and we were walking down the street, I was taught that I was to walk on the street side near the cars. Why, because it was symbolic of my responsibility to take care of her. You need to tell your kids that, you need to tell

your boys that, that this is a responsibility that they're going to have. The Scripture refers to our caring about our wives, husbands loving their wives to the point of death if necessary, the responsibility is to care for her. And when you go back to provision or to provide for, the apostle Paul said that if a man won't provide for his family, he's worse than an unbeliever. This is an important principle. You need to teach this to your kids, and fathers are in the best position to do this. The third is a matter of leadership. Boy, you talk about a controversial issue here, but a man is responsible to lead his family. I'm not talking about being dictatorial, I'm not talking about ruling with an iron fist. I'm talking about servant leadership. This is what a man is supposed to do, to care for and lead his family.

The fourth is to be a spiritual mentor to the family. This is the man's responsibility. I can't tell you how many women have come up to me with a question about family life and said, the most frustrating thing in our family is my husband will not accept spiritual leadership at home. And yet, that is a role that he is supposed to accept. You can begin to teach your kids about that ultimate role and how they are to function within a family, and really, as I said before, only a man can teach a boy how to do that.

There is a very, very important point here that I hope I can get across, and it is called detachment and differentiation. In other words, a boy detaches from his mother and then begins to accept the role model that he sees in the father. The father really needs to entice the boy away from the feminine characteristics in the mother and begin to teach him to identify with the masculine model. Now folks, listen to me. It is now believed that homosexuality is very typically rooted in the failure to accomplish that differentiation. And when you see individuals who are very, very feminine and you go back and you look at the early child development characteristics, you will see a failure to make that change.

I've been very blessed from the early days with a memory of my childhood. And would you believe that I recall that change taking place? Now, I couldn't have used these words and I didn't understand it, but I knew that I was pulling back from my mother and toward my father between two and three years of age. And I was born Caesarian section, 1936. And my mother was not able to have any more children because in those days, they thought you could die if you have more than one child by Caesarian section. So I was an only child and I was the whole world to my mother. She didn't even want children before I was born. And once I was born, I became the centerpiece of her life. And at two to three years of age, I became aware that she was smothering me a little bit too much. Can you believe that? I recall that.

And one day she had her arms around me and she was kissing me. And I said to her, "I think that's silly." And my mother was a very bright lady and she got it. She instantly said, "So do I." And she backed off. But what was happening was that I was moving away from my mother and toward my dad, and then my dad and I bonded in a very different way. That's why fathers need to be there. When they're not there, when they're rejecting, when they're harsh, when they're

completely absent, when they work too hard, when they're not part of the scene, it is very typical during that time for boys to get confused about that role. And some of them almost consciously choose to stay within the safety of that feminine relationship instead of doing the hard work of changing and moving in the direction of a masculine role model.

Many men today do not know what it means to be a man. They don't know what masculinity is all about. And the reason they don't is they've never been taught and they've never seen it. And in our culture in particular, everything masculine is under attack, and there is this assault on masculinity. Many fathers feel that they should not be very physical with their boys because maybe that's the source of homosexuality. And it's not, you need to be physical. Put your arms around them. Tell them that you love them. Tell them you're proud of them. Call them your son. "You are my son." There aren't very many people, only three of you or two or one who can say that. Hug them. Fathers, you are in a very critical role during that period between 18 months and five years. It will be important later. It'll be important in the adolescent years as we talked about just a minute ago. But especially in that four-year window, you really do need to be on the scene.

Roger Marsh:

Well, what a critical lesson for every father who's listening to understand how important it is to spend quality time with your kids, especially your sons. I'm Roger Marsh, and you've been listening to a classic presentation here on Family Talk. Now, before we get to the remainder of today's program, I want to let you know about a useful resource that is available to help encourage parents and provide some guidance through the challenges of raising their sons.

The Dr. James Dobson Family Institute has developed a new free 10-day email series based on Dr. Dobson's best-selling book called "Bringing Up Boys." It's designed to equip you to wisely lead your sons to become godly men. Now to sign up to receive this free email series, click the link at the bottom of the broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. Now as we rejoin today's broadcast, you're going to hear Dr. Dobson's classic Q&A session with an audience that was in-studio when this was originally recorded. Now, let's return to this timeless edition of Family Talk.

Laura:

I just wanted to thank you because as a woman who is dating right now, and I'm looking for my possible mate, it hurts to know that you have to plan how much money you're going to take with you on a date. And many times on dates, you don't know if you're going to be protected, and that always hurts. A lot of times they refer, well, if I'm going to pay for this, then later on in the night, and then it's just cut to the chase in the beginning and then you go home.

Dr. James Dobson:

Okay, you get stuck once. How about twice?

Laura:

Oh, with the same person?

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Would you go out with that person again?

Laura: That's the last date.

Dr. James Dobson: That's it. Do you agree that you ought to object to that? Do you object to it?

Laura: I think that if I knew better how to, I probably would. But-

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. So you just go along with it.

Laura: My nature is to just go along and then not go out with him again.

Dr. James Dobson: How about those that don't call in advance, but just sort of expect you to be ready?

Laura: That's not going to happen. My mom told me once, she will never let me go out with a guy that honks in the driveway. "You won't walk out the door, Laura, if he honks."

Dr. James Dobson: Let's hear it for her mother. Take the microphone. Let me ask the guys who are here. Give them the microphone. Okay. How would you feel about a girl calling you and asking for a date?

Speaker 6: I don't think I would like it very much. I think it kind of robs... like if a girl called me and was interested in asking me out, I think it would rob me of my just internal desire to be the one who instigates the relationship.

Dr. James Dobson: Does that happen?

Speaker 6: You mean a girl calling me asking me out? Heck yeah, I'm joking. It has happened before, but it was mostly with friends. It was never with someone that I wasn't comfortable enough to say, yeah, we'll go get ice cream or something like that. But I'd like also to comment on just, I don't think all the hope is lost. I have an incredible family. My father was one who wasn't just a spiritual leader. I am in a male-dominated household and me and my brothers and my dad would just sit around and just grunt. That's just being a man.

Dr. James Dobson: That's sure impressive.

Speaker 6: We would do this, but at the same time, I would walk in on my parents on their knees by their bed, praying for their kids. And my father was one who I could watch him cry and he was one that stepped out and not only was interested in me developing as a male, but he disciplined me to follow Jesus Christ and it's encouraging for me to see that, man, not all the hope is lost.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, absolutely.

Speaker 6: We're raising up men, godly men in this nation. I'm excited about the next generation.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you're a very fortunate young man, I can tell you that. Let me ask you this. Were you taught to open a door for a woman?

Speaker 6: Oh, absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: There are a lot of women who'd like to find you, man.

Speaker 6: Well, I got in serious trouble if I didn't just growing up.

Dr. James Dobson: Let me ask the others of you. This is wonderful stuff. Tell me, in a formal situation, we're not talking about McDonald's now. In a formal situation, would you help your date with her chair?

Speaker 7: Yeah. I think that would be a good way of showing a respect and a consideration for the date. I don't know, I probably forget a lot of times because either we're sitting in a booth-

Dr. James Dobson: Well, don't you ever forget it again.

Roger Marsh: You know, there's something every dad needs to hear in that. Your presence on the scene matters more than getting it right or perfect. Sons are watching, and no one else can fill the role that you fill, Dad. You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson on this edition of Family Talk, featuring part one of his classic lesson on raising boys. We've titled today's presentation, "Raising Boys: Routine Panic." And if you'd like to hear this broadcast again or to pass it along to a father who needs a word of encouragement, you'll find the broadcast at jdfi.org. And if you're in the thick of raising sons right now, you'll definitely want to embark on a free 10-day journey with us, our newly revamped "Bringing Up Boys" email series. This free 10-day journey is drawn straight from Dr. Dobson's book, *Bringing Up Boys*. It's refreshed with practical wisdom and biblical insight for parents raising boys today. So whether your boys are toddlers or teenagers, this series will equip you to lead them with confidence toward becoming godly men. To get started, simply go to drjamesdobson.org and search for that title, Bringing Up Boys. Enter your email address and start receiving that 10-day email series. Again, go to jdfi.org or drjamesdobson.org and search for the title, Bringing up Boys.

Well, as I mentioned at the start of today's program, this is a memorial week for us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Coming up this Friday, August 21st, marks the first anniversary of Dr. Dobson's homegoing, receiving his ultimate healing early in the morning on Thursday, August 21st, 2025. To commemorate this special week of celebrating that memorial, we have a special opportunity for you as a supporter of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

When you give a gift of an amount in support of our ministry this week, we will thank you for that tax-deductible donation by sending you a copy of the final Best of Broadcast Legacy edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. It's something we put together shortly after Dr. Dobson passed away, and it features programs that you haven't heard in quite some time. In some cases, hardly have heard them at all. One of them was the first edition of Family Talk from May 13, 2010, which we aired on that first day and never re-aired again until we put it together in our Best of Broadcast collection. You'll also hear the final edition of Family Talk that Dr. Dobson recorded here in the studio in Colorado Springs back in the spring of 2025. Those programs and more make up our Best of Broadcast Memorial Collection, and we want to send you a copy as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute today. So you can make a secure donation online at jdafi.org. If you'd like more information on how to get your six-CD set over the phone, call a member of our constituent care team. That number is 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Or if it's easier, you can write to us, send your donation and your request to our ministry mailing address, and that is the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code 80949.

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 tune in again next time right here for part two of Dr. Dobson's classic presentation on "Raising Boys: Routine Panic." That's coming up here on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

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