



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Defeating Dementia – Part 1

Guest(s): Dr. Richard Furman

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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 division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and here's a sobering statistic for you. According to the Alzheimer's Association, an estimated 7.4 million Americans are currently living with Alzheimer's dementia, and projections suggest that the number of new cases could double by the year 2050. Now, for families walking through this season right now, the fear and grief can feel all consuming. And the question many are quietly asking is, could this happen to me? Well, on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, Dr. Dobson sits down with his longtime friend, Dr. Richard Furman, for a candid and deeply encouraging conversation about what we can actually do to lower our risk of developing dementia. Dr. Fuhrman brings over 30 years of experience as a vascular surgeon and has served as president of both the North Carolina chapter of the American College of Surgeons and the North Carolina Surgical Society.

He also co-founded World Medical Mission, the medical arm of Samaritan's Purse. Dr. Furman's book, *Defeating Dementia*, grew out of watching his mother-in-law decline through every stage of Alzheimer's and discovering that the research points to real actionable hope. The conversation is coming up for you right now on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Today, we're going to talk about a very difficult subject that many families are dealing with today, and that is the debilitating diagnosis of Alzheimer's. We were talking in here in the studio just a few minutes ago and agreed that from our perspective, this may be the cruelest disease of all. Did you know that according to the Alzheimer's Association, 5.7 million Americans are living with it and projections are, listen to this now, the projections are that that number will rise to 14 million by the year 2050. And an even more sobering statistic is that half of all Americans who are now 85 or older are afflicted by this horrible disease. Half, half of the Americans, half of us who have reached that age. I haven't, but I know a lot of people who have and who are suffering with it. I said this is one of the most cruel of all illnesses.

Let me tell you why. It robs patients of their memories of childhood and courtship and parents and awareness of grandchildren and friends. It strips

them of fellowship with God and a reflection on life. Every good thing is taken away, especially the marital relationship: dating and the fun things and the humor and the vacations. Everything you've experienced is gone. Only one party remembers them. It is devastating for victims and families alike. Those closest to those afflicted often suffer their own private hell. I don't use that word often. This comes close to it. And there is no cure for it, but there may be an avenue to prevention, and that's what we're going to talk about today. This is what makes this program so important. I said also before we went on the air that this may be one of the most important topics that we have dealt with in many years.

It's relevant even to the young. It's relevant to everybody. But even including the millennials who are sometimes accused of being self-absorbed, many of their grandparents are going through it and some of their parents will walk this path. And I don't know how to tell you guys this, but you will be there soon yourself. Take it from me. Life passes awfully quickly so it's relevant to you too. In fact, you may be in the best position to prevent it and we'll talk more about that. The book that we're going to be discussing today is a must read by all of us. It's titled *Defeating Dementia*. It's written by my guest and wonderful friend, Dr. Richard Furman. A cardiologist and surgeon, been in practice for 30 years. He has been the surgeon and the physician for Franklin Graham and Billy Graham before he died. And of course, the Samaritan's Purse folks. I wish I could take the time to tell you all the things that he's done. Dick, welcome back to Family Talk. It's so good to have you here.

Dr. Richard Furman: Well, it's great to be here again, Dr. Dobson. Good to be here.

Dr. James Dobson: We've discussed several of your books and previous programs, and I've appreciated them all. But this one is unique. Do you feel that way about it? This one's kind of set aside.

Dr. Richard Furman: It's the most exciting one I've ever written, and I think the most informative and the one that everybody ought to know about, defeating dementia.

Dr. James Dobson: Did I overstate the case of what Alzheimer's is like?

Dr. Richard Furman: No. It's known to be the most dreaded disease in America. The people dread that more than cancer. I mean, just studies show that, that if you ask that question, it's terrible. And to watch your mother-in-law, Mrs. Dale, as I put in the book, to watch her go through 15 years of the progressive stages of Alzheimer's, it's terrible. It's hard to believe.

Dr. James Dobson: I mentioned also before we went on the air that I have a very good friend, also a physician whose wife has been dying of Alzheimer's or experiencing it, and now she is dying. I've followed it closely. It's a tender spot that you just ... I don't know how people deal with it. I really don't. You wrote about your mother-in-law in your book. I've got a paragraph from that book. Would you read it for us?

Dr. Richard Furman: What drove you to write this book? Well, I watched my mother-in-law progress through the three stages of Alzheimer's. I watched her go from being an active middle-aged lady to beginning to forget little things like her car keys and not remembering where she was driving to and calling someone on the phone and not remembering who she was calling when they answered. I saw her lose everyday independence the day I got her doctor to write a prescription, which we placed on the refrigerator stating no driving. Then came the walker, the wheelchair, and finally being bedridden and completely dependent on caregivers.

Dr. James Dobson: So you've watched this not only as a physician and as one taking care of patients medically, but inside your family.

Dr. Richard Furman: Right. And that's what really got me is to watch her go through these different stages of Alzheimer's. And I'm a physician. I always thought it was the genes, but I just wonder what's going on in her brain.

Dr. James Dobson: Until recently, medical science thought it was primarily genetic, right?

Dr. Richard Furman: Right. The genes was a big, we thought was a big part of it. But to tell you the truth, and I started reading and studying the medical literature to see what part really does genes have to play with it. And it was remarkable for me as a doctor to realize it's not nearly as significant as I thought. Only 5% of Alzheimer's is due to the Alzheimer's gene that guarantees you're going to have Alzheimer's if you have that gene. But there's another gene, APOE4, which 10 to 20% of Americans have, which makes you more prone to have Alzheimer's, but it doesn't mean you're going to have Alzheimer's, nor does it mean you're not going to have Alzheimer's unless you do something about it. The things that you have control over, three lifestyles that you can do...

Dr. James Dobson: Well, that's kind of encouraging, isn't it?

Dr. Richard Furman: It's very encouraging. I was shocked.

Dr. James Dobson: So each of us is on the hook for our own health, really, at that stage.

Dr. Richard Furman: That's right. And that's exactly what I want the reader of this book to realize is that the road you're on determines your destination.

Dr. James Dobson: But before you tell us that, give us the evidence for it. The Journal of the American Medical Association's one of the most prestigious journals in medicine around the world, really. I published an article in it. It was one of my crowning achievements when I was at Children's Hospital. They did a study of 1800 patients over a period of 11...

Dr. Richard Furman: 14 years.

Dr. James Dobson: 14 years. And what did they ... I mean, this is hard research.

Dr. Richard Furman: It followed these people for 14 years, and they found that the ones who ate properly versus the ones who ate the bad food, and I wasn't real sure exactly what the bad food was or the good food was. The ones who ate the bad diet were 40% more likely to develop Alzheimer's. Well, that was shocking.

Dr. James Dobson: That's pretty dramatic.

Dr. Richard Furman: What was even more dramatic was they had this group of people and there was a group of them that exercised, and there was a group that didn't exercise. They saw the ones that didn't exercise versus the ones that exercised. The ones that exercised had a 48% less likelihood of developing Alzheimer's. Then there was another group that did both. They ate properly and exercise properly, and they had a 67% less likelihood.

Dr. James Dobson: I hope everybody got that because you threw statistics to people who, some of them are driving cars on their way to work and thinking about many things. Go back and think about that. If I walked up to you and you are aware of Alzheimer's or other dementia causes, and I said to you, without a great deal of effort, you can lower your risk 67% just by doing these three things.

Dr. Richard Furman: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Man, alive, I think I could sell that.

Dr. Richard Furman: That only covered the food and the exercise. And I got to think about, what about the third lifestyle, the weight? And this was what was shocking. If you are overweight, you've doubled your odds of getting Alzheimer's. If you're obese, you've tripled your chances of getting Alzheimer's. So I'm thinking, "Hey, this is something that everybody ought to know. Those three different lifestyles can change your future."

Dr. James Dobson: Give them to us again.

Dr. Richard Furman: All right. The food that you eat was the 40%. The exercise with the 48%, the combination was the 67%, but the weight, and this is important, the weight, if you're overweight, you're twice as likely. It doubles your odds of developing Alzheimer's. If you're obese, it triples your odds. And there's a lot to being with overweight that goes with the health of your arteries. And the more you read about these, these three lifestyles, they all zero in on the health of your arteries. And we can get into that a little later, but-

Dr. James Dobson: In fact, that's what your book is really about.

Dr. Richard Furman: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: It's about the health of the arteries.

Dr. Richard Furman: Well, you can't do a study of the literature about Alzheimer's that it doesn't come back to the health of your arteries. And I'd say at least a third of the articles written in the literature will talk about that the health of your heart is similar to the health of your brain. So that's the bottom line of it all. There are things we can be doing that protects the blood flow. You got to have the nutrients going into the brain, the oxygen and the nutrients, but it also has to clear out the bad part, the debris of the brain. It's got to carry that off. That blood flow is the one most significant part of defeating Alzheimer's.

Dr. James Dobson: We're going to talk about each of those three because it's really important to understand what's going on. The title of this book is really magnificent, *Defeating Dementia*. Can you really make that statement? Can you really say to America and the world, you probably don't have to go this route.

Dr. Richard Furman: Exactly. And that's what I was going to say a minute ago about going down this road. Everybody listening to us today, everybody that reads the book, they're being presented a fork in the road. They're going to decide they're going to continue on like they are or they're going to change. They're going to commit to a change. And that change, the book goes through all of the different steps of what we can be doing percentage wise to defeat dementia.

Dr. James Dobson: I was 54 years of age and I was playing basketball and I played three times a week and I absolutely loved it. It was the most fun part of my week. And I went up for a lay-in and shot the ball clear over the basket and I knew something was drastically wrong and I had chest pain and I had a heart attack. That probably saved ... Well, it did. It threatened my life. I could have died right there, but it saved my life because I made some changes very quickly and I kept them. One of them was exercise. The second is I changed my way of eating and I mean, it was radical. I mean, you spend 10 days in a cardiac care unit not knowing if you're going to live, it gets your attention. And I lay there and I said, "Lord, if You give me another chance, I won't mess it up." And a lot of people change their diets for a little bit, for a short time. It's so hard. The whole culture takes you in the other direction, your family, all of the events. I just had a birthday and there was stuff presented to me there that I haven't eaten in a while, but then the third one was the hardest for me, and that's weight. You would think exercising that amount would keep the weight out off, but you still have got to exercise a lot of discipline, don't you?

Dr. Richard Fun: It's all intertwined, all the three. And didn't your father have a heart attack?

Dr. James Dobson: Listen, my dad had four brothers. All five of them died of coronary artery disease.

Dr. Richard Furman: Okay.

Dr. James Dobson: And my grandmother had a stroke. My grandfather had a heart attack. Seven of them, and on the paternal side, died of heart attacks or strokes. And here I am, healthy seemingly.

Dr. Richard Furman: The first time you ever told me that, Dr. Dobson, it just ran through my mind. And I think I told you then your exercise, and we'll get into cholesterol later, but your exercise increased your hero, HDL, cholesterol, which cleans out those arteries. Exercising that every day for those five years, that has saved your life. That's why you're sitting here today, or you wouldn't be here, but you made that commitment to exercise. And there's so much to exercise that's so significant, not only with your heart, but with Alzheimer's. And if you think about it-

Dr. James Dobson: I had no idea that I was affecting my brain.

Dr. Richard Furman: Anytime you affect your heart, you're affecting your brain with more blood flow to your brain. But exercise, you think about it, it increases that HDL. Just flashing light there, that exercise increases your good HDL, which cleans out your arteries. There's nothing. There's no medicine. There's not a pill you can take to increase your HDL. Exercise is the main thing. Also, exercise increases the strength of your heart. It's like lifting weights to get your biceps that someone exercise their heart's much thicker, that it's stronger. So it's more efficient. So what you did is not only did you clean out your arteries, but you increase the strength of your heart. There's no medicine that will increase the strength of your heart. And I get that across to people who don't exercise. There was a study where they studied people who exercised the most and the least. The ones that exercised that went in the top 10% versus the ones who were in the bottom 10%, the bottom 10% were twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's and they'd follow them along with these with-

Dr. James Dobson: That's scary.

Dr. Richard Furman: Well, just let that sink in. They followed it along and there's the ones that didn't exercise, they had this beta amyloid building up in the brain. They could see it, a picture of it, double the odds. Now, and I used to think, well, I see people walking around the track and I'm thinking, they're not really exercising. But more and more you read these articles, even walking is considered great exercise with Alzheimer's. And the study that I like showed that if you can't walk one lap or a quarter of a mile versus someone who walks two miles a day, and this was four to five days a week in this article, they were double the chance of getting Alzheimer's, the ones that didn't walk versus the ones that walked the two miles. So even walking is a great exercise in preventing Alzheimer's. I kept wondering why that doesn't put that much strain on the heart.

How does that work? Realize it enhances the other lifestyles. It convinces yourself, convinces your mind that if you exercise, okay, I'm going to eat differently. I'm going to lose some weight. It enhances these other lifestyles that they're all intertwined. So even if you're just walking, today I'd say the one most

important takeaway from this program, get yourself a goal to exercise five to six days a week, starting today, even if it's just walking.

Dr. James Dobson: And it also affects other organs of the body, doesn't it?

Dr. Richard Furman: Oh, sure.

Dr. James Dobson: Those same disciplines, if you will, affect diabetes and cancer and any number of things. It's general health.

Dr. Richard Furman: Weight loss, you think of colon cancer and you think of breast cancer. That's just the exercise is related to your weight. Your weight's related to especially those two cancers. So it does. It affects a lot more of your body than we have time to discuss today.

Dr. James Dobson: As a matter of fact, our time is gone, but boy, we're not through talking about this. I want to talk about those three disciplines next time. Okay. You've flown out here to be with us. You came a long way. So we're going to just continue talking right now and then we'll let people hear tomorrow what we're saying today. But Dick, I appreciate you so much. You've become a great friend to me.

Dr. Richard Furman: Well, it's mutual.

Dr. James Dobson: We both love the same Lord, don't we?

Dr. Richard Furman: Yeah, that's right. I'd forgotten you'd had that heart attack long ago and it just dawned on me whenever you told me a few weeks ago about it, that's what saved your life.

Dr. James Dobson: You said you've never seen anything quite like that.

Dr. Richard Furman: No. No. That you had what, three arteries blocked?

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. I had the main artery, the LAD, the widow maker, was totally blocked.

Dr. Richard Furman: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: And the left and right circumflex were also 30 and 40% blocked.

Dr. Richard Furman: Yeah. Well, deciding to exercise is why you're here. I mean, the other things too, but that's the one most significant factor you picked up on. And that's why I want to get the readers to realize don't wait on something like that. Just read the book and let that be the inspiration to-

Dr. James Dobson: And the book is *Defeating Dementia*, what you can do to prevent Alzheimer's. Wouldn't you like to have a book that said what you can do to prevent cancer? Well, you can probably lower the risk, but it's out there and people get a

surprise with cancer. But here, you're making a definitive statement. What you can do to prevent Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. You know, that's a good news story, isn't it?

Dr. Richard Furman: It's great news. It was surprising to me as a physician, but it's something that I realized, "Hey, there are things we can be doing."

Dr. James Dobson: And Dr. Furman, next time, of all the things that I want to cover in that period of time, and there's a lot, I'm most interested in how you can detect Alzheimer's. There is a way to know that you got work to do and we'll tell people how next time.

Dr. Richard Furman: Yeah. Okay.

Roger Marsh: The road you're on determines your destination, and on today's edition of Family Talk, Dr. Richard Furman showed us that when it comes to Alzheimer's, that road is more within our control than most of us even realize. You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, featuring part one of Dr. Dobson's conversation with Dr. Richard Furman. They've been discussing his book, *Defeating Dementia*. And if you'd like to hear this program again or share it with a friend or learn more about this powerful resource, visit jdfi.net. You know Dr. Dobson served for 17 years on the attending staff of Children's Hospital of Los Angeles and for 14 years as an associate clinical professor of pediatrics at USC before dedicating his life fully to ministry. He believed that faith and medicine were never meant to be in separate corners, that the God who knit us together in our mother's wombs cares deeply about how we care for the bodies He gave us.

And that conviction is woven into the DNA of the ministry here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. We exist to strengthen families through biblical truth, to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with as many people as possible, and to defend the sanctity of human life in all its God-given dignity. This sacred mission continues through the faithful generosity of listeners who believe it matters. And if today's program encouraged you, equipped you, or simply gave you hope for someone you love, we invite you to stand with us. You can call a member of our constituent care team at 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. If you prefer, you can also send a 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's P.O. Box 3900, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80949. Or to give a gift securely online, go to jdfi.net.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and on behalf of all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson and Family Institute, thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time right here when Dr. Richard Furman returns with specific practical steps you can take right now to lower your risk of dementia. That's coming up 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.