



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Sisterly Advice on Faith and Life

Guest(s): Danae Dobson

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Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener-supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh and we do have a special program for you today, featuring a special guest, Danae Dobson, the daughter of our founder, Dr. James Dobson. Now Danae is of course a Dobson family member. She's also a member of our board of directors here at JDFI, and she's joining us now before the start of the broadcast to share a few words. Danae?

Danae Dobson: Thank you, Roger. Hello, everyone. I am Danae Dobson, daughter of Dr. James and Shirley Dobson, and I've been in Colorado Springs for a visit with my parents these past few weeks, and I thought I'd pop into the studio to greet you all and introduce our program today. Before we begin, I have to say that there's something really special about coming home to mom and dad. I live in Southern California where my parents used to live, they've been in Colorado for 33 years now, and one of my favorite subjects to talk about with my parents is the good old days. So maybe you can relate to that in your own family. When you get together, no matter how much time has elapsed, you just pick up right where you left off, and my parents have been a big part of my entire life, so there's always a lot to talk about.

Well, that brings me to our topic today, which has to do with teenage girls. All you have to do is spend about five minutes with adolescent girls and you'll find that most of them desperately need to talk, and talk and talk and talk. Well, as much as we're looking for a listening ear, younger girls are especially looking for someone to speak into their lives, someone who will help them wrestle with issues such as body image, peer pressure, and guys, of course. While research shows that parents are extremely influential in the lives of their teens, including the choices they make, many times, teenagers feel the need to share with and be advised by trusted females who are a little older and have a measure of wisdom and experience to share. What they really need are big sisters in the role of mentorship.

I had a godly mentor for 30 years until she passed away, and her name was Kathleen Hart, and her influence was invaluable to me and it still impacts me to this day. So having weathered the teen years myself, I took on the mentoring role and wrote a couple books for adolescent girls years ago. One is entitled *Let's Talk*, and the other is *Let's Walk The Talk*. And I wrote these books because I really wanted to help teen girls deal with issues that we all go through, the issues that I went through.

I realize that today's young people are caught up in their virtual world, everybody's online, and the dynamics have changed from when I was a teen, but there are universal issues that every generation is confronted with such as what is God's plan for my future, self-esteem and identity, parent child conflicts, entertainment choices, growing in our relationship with the Lord. We can all relate to that. So I attempted to be a big sister, so to speak, by providing advice in my two books for teen girls. And when Family Talk was in its infancy, I sat down with my dad in the studio and we did a broadcast and shared an exchange about this subject. So let's listen now to the discussion I had with my dad, Dr. James Dobson about my book, *Let's Walk The Talk*, right here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: She has been precious to me since the day I met her in the delivery room. And Danae, I am so glad to have you here.

Danae Dobson: Oh, thanks, dad. There's only two people who ever come to this studio and refer to you as dad, so that's probably a shock for the listeners. They're going to hear "dad" all the way through this.

Dr. James Dobson: How about Dr. Dobson? Would that... No, I don't think that works.

Danae Dobson: I don't think I've ever called you that before, and let's not start now.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I am very honored to be called dad, and it's really a pleasure to have you here. Do you remember that first *Woof* book, and you remember the excitement? You were only 12, and do you remember the thrill of publishing your first book?

Danae Dobson: Absolutely. Well, actually I wrote it when I was 11, and then it was published when I was 12, so that was one of the most significant gifts that the Lord has ever bestowed upon me. But you had a hand in that, because it was your little stories that you told in the carpool on the way to school that prompted me to write my first story that was based upon the theme of a dog named Woof.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, I was making them up as I went along too.

Danae Dobson: And doing a good job of it. In fact, as you'll recall, one morning you drove up to the front of the school and you were tired of telling Woof stories, so you decided you were going to end one by saying that he died. The kids who were in the carpool, they really got depressed about it, and all day at school we kind of

talked about it. There were a few tears, and so when dad picked us up that afternoon, we made him find a way to resurrect Woof and bring him back to life again.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you've gone on from writing books for children, other books in addition to the Woof books, and then you came to your first book for teen girls. That was about four or five years ago and it was called...

Danae Dobson: *Let's Talk: Good Stuff for Girlfriends About God, Guys, and Growing Up.*

Dr. James Dobson: And it is a conversational big-sister type book. That was your purpose, to introduce girls to Christian concepts and just general advice like a big sister would have for a little sister.

Danae Dobson: Right. That book really tapped into the issues that teen girls are dealing with, such as postmodernism and family dilemmas and dating issues, maintaining a healthy weight and eating disorders, clothing choices. There were many issues that I covered in that book, and a lot of them are issues that transcend the generations that... Because some issues such as self-esteem, peer pressure, of figuring out what you're going to do with your life and where God fits into the plan, I mean generations have dealt with those issues. They're always relevant.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, today we're going to talk about the sequel to *Let's Talk*, and give us the complete title and subtitle again, please.

Danae Dobson: The title is *Let's Walk The Talk: Girlfriend to Girlfriend on Faith, Friendship and Finding Real Love*. And the real love is really referring to discovering the love of God.

Dr. James Dobson: There's a strong spiritual component in this book, and you told me before we came in the studio that you have found teen girls really want that spiritual component.

Danae Dobson: They do. And yet what I found in my research is that the ones who are really committed to the Lord and are sold out for Christ a hundred percent, they just cannot be moved. They are grounded, and that's encouraging.

Dr. James Dobson: Despite the culture and the influences, the culture. I am working on my own book for girls. Isn't it interesting that we're both writing for girls, and the reason is because girls are going through a great deal today, even more than when I wrote *Bringing up Boys*. The world has changed, and girls are in more trouble now, I think, than they've ever been, at least in my lifetime. And so that's why your book is of interest to me, Danae, and it'll be fun to compare notes because we're dealing with the same issues coming from a different perspective. I have a chapter called "The River of Culture," which talks about the fact that the river of culture is a raging Colorado river. It is crashing downstream, and if you're not careful, it will carry you into unknown waters. And that's why I feel so strongly

that it's parents' responsibility to help them navigate the river. And you're doing it in a different way. Yours is directly to teens. What are you hearing from them?

Danae Dobson: Well, I had a unique opportunity with this book because in my former book it was just me writing to the teens, but in this book I really wanted to bring in other people. I wanted to bring in teen girls, guys, youth ministers, high school teachers, middle school teachers, and I wanted to ask them a lot of questions, everything from standards in regard to entertainment to abstinence, and they gave me some really great candid responses, and I was so impressed by what I heard. And the teens whom I interviewed, they really are aware of the challenges out there, but they want to come through and they want to finish strong, and I was really impressed. They actually were a lot more conservative than I had even presumed they would be.

Dr. James Dobson: You talked to boys too, didn't you?

Danae Dobson: Mm-hmm.

Dr. James Dobson: You have some interviews with the guys?

Danae Dobson: Teen girls and teen guys, and a couple of the teens, the guys whom I interviewed, they attend a public high school, and one of them told me that the cuss words are just unbelievable. Some words are as common as the word "the." So he was saying that even though he doesn't use that kind of language, it's difficult because those words come into his mind, even if.... How could you not be around that five days a week and not be impacted by it? But he said that he's had some great opportunities to be a light and an example even on his swim team, because the guys know that he doesn't cuss, and all the rest of them do, and he said sometimes he feels like he's not heard or acknowledged because he doesn't cuss, but nevertheless, he's making a difference and they are seeing that difference in his life.

Dr. James Dobson: I taught school as you know, when I was very young. I taught the sixth grade, seventh grade, eighth grade. I was a junior high counselor and then a high school counselor. And so I was around a lot of kids at that time, and girls in that era did not cuss. I mean there were rough girls who did, but you didn't hear it like that. And I grieve for young people who are trying to live a Christian life who are just saturated with that stuff around them at this time. You talk in your book about eating disorders and you did quite a bit of research on that. In fact, some of your research was helpful to me. Explain what you have learned and what you have said.

Danae Dobson: That's really heartbreaking to me, because, well, you may recall a year ago in Nashville we had dinner with a friend of our family's and he expressed concern about one of his daughters who was struggling with an eating disorder, and that's how I found out about what she was going through. So I contacted her and I interviewed her for my book, and she was very, very open, very forthright

in her responses, but she said that what caused her to start bingeing and purging was the fact that she didn't really want to lose weight, she just wanted to stay thin, and she discovered that she got a lot more attention, especially from guys, when she had a great body. And so it was reinforcement in a negative way because she wanted to be the pretty girl, she wanted to be the girl whom everybody liked, and she found that by bingeing and purging that that was giving her the reinforcement that she sought.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. It is unbelievable, because five-year-olds are now captured by the culture, either through television or the internet or their peers at five years. It's unbelievable what's happening to girls, and that's why I'm so glad Danae has written this book. Let's do talk about cutting, because I dealt with that in my book as well.

Danae Dobson: Right. I interviewed a physician from the Remuda Ranch, which is a ministry for those with eating disorders, and he provided a wealth of information, but I asked him, what causes girls to injure themselves? And he said that based upon seeing and interviewing a lot of patients that he believes the primary reason is to provide a way of dealing with emotions. Because the girls feel a lot of anger or depression and cutting themselves enables them to experience temporary relief from their emotional pain. So it kind causes the internal pain to become external, and therefore it provides some relief. So when a person has gone through a past trauma such as sexual abuse, when she relives that experience in her mind, then when she injures herself, it's a way to kind of put an end to those thoughts and bring herself back to reality.

Dr. James Dobson: It also releases endorphins, so that they get a kind of high from doing this.

Danae Dobson: I know. Isn't that twisted?

Dr. James Dobson: It's a terrible thing.

Danae Dobson: Yeah, and I asked this physician, what areas of the body are the girls most likely to cut? And he said typically their arms and legs. But with eating disorder patients, they often see girls who have cut the areas of their bodies that they're most disgusted with, such as their thighs or their abdomens, and it's a way of expressing anger or hatred toward their bodies.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. What did you say to these girls in your book?

Danae Dobson: Well, obviously that's not the right way to handle your emotions. The right way to handle it is to give it to the Lord in prayer, just unload it all upon him. Nobody and nothing is worth hurting yourself. And even in my own life, when I'm going through a difficult time, the way I deal with it is to give it to the Lord and let Him deal with it. What better way can you possibly deal with your emotional problems?

Dr. James Dobson: Well, that is extremely important, but I'm sure you also told them they need help, because this is not a disorder that you can talk yourself out of. It's not one you're likely to get out of on your own, and it's not one that parents can deal with by saying, "You've got to stop doing this." That does not help. And you have to put these young women, and there are guys who do it too, into the hands of individuals who are thoroughly trained, know how teens think, and help them to come out of this ridiculous behavior.

Danae Dobson: That's right, because as I learned in my research that cutting can become an addiction.

Dr. James Dobson: And who would've believed, 75 years ago, a hundred years ago, that this would be a problem with kids who are deliberately harming themselves, and these are not the only ways. Suicide is related to it too, and other forms of self-harmful behavior. Now, Danae, if you will permit me, I am going to read two things that I wrote about you in my book. "When Danae was three years old, I was a professor of pediatrics at a medical school and a researcher at a large children's hospital. Five days a week, I would prepare to leave with my briefcase for a long drive through Los Angeles traffic. Typically, Danae would cry. She didn't want me to go. I would give her a big hug and I'd promised her hurry home that afternoon, but she was inconsolable. I can still see this precious kid standing in the doorway crying."

"Danae was particularly upset one morning, as I explained again why daddy had to go to work. Her beautiful blue eyes welled up with tears and she said, sorrowfully, 'It's all right, daddy. I forgive you.' I asked my daughter a few weeks ago if she remembered those days. She has a remarkably vivid memory of her childhood, which is almost scary at times. She not only remembered her tears on that morning that I'm describing, but she recalled something for me that I had forgotten."

"One day, when she was three, she and her mother came to the front yard to wave at me as I drove away. I had already backed out of the driveway, however, and I didn't see them standing there. Danae recalls that she sobbed in disappointment. Then when I was a long block away, I happened to catch a glimpse of my little family in my rear view mirror. They were still frantically waving goodbye. As I was going around the corner, I put my arm out of the window and I waved in return. Even after all these years, Danae remembers the excitement she felt at that moment when her daddy saw her and returned her wave." You're crying, Danae.

Danae Dobson: That's beautiful. Yeah, that's really special. I remember that so vividly because we had waved for so long and you didn't see us, and you were almost ready to turn the corner, and I saw that hand go up, and it was like I felt like my job was done that day.

Dr. James Dobson: I didn't remember it till you told me about it, but I vividly remember it today, because I just frantically waved out the window and hoped that you would see me, and I found out that night you did.

Danae Dobson: There's one thing I wanted to mention though, and you and mom were just so good about providing unconditional love for us and spending time with us, and yet my self-esteem still got whacked in junior high. I think that happens to a lot of kids. They can have a great upbringing, but sometimes on the school campus, it's a whole other situation. As you'll recall, in ninth grade, I transferred to a new school. I didn't really know anybody. I couldn't break into the cliques even if I had tried. And so that was a very difficult time for me. It was a public school.

And I remember the very first day of school, there was a girl who was assigned to take me around to my classes and show me where the lunch area was. And so she seemed to like me and so we kind of hit it off and the next day I thought that the same arrangement was going to repeat itself. So I'll never forget standing in the snack line with her on my second day, and she turned to me and she said, "You don't have to keep hanging around with me if you don't want." And I knew exactly what that meant.

Dr. James Dobson: That put a knife in your back, didn't it?

Danae Dobson: I knew that meant get lost. I went through worse situations than that in ninth grade. But my point is that a kid can't go through experiences like that and come out unscathed. No matter how great a Christian upbringing he or she has, wounds at school can run deep. And I tried to be sensitive to that in my book, because kids spend a lot more time with their peers than they do with their parents during the teen years. And that's why I encouraged my readers to sink their roots down deeper in their relationship with the Lord and concentrate on how extraordinarily valuable they are to Him, and how much He loved them enough to make the ultimate sacrifice. Because throughout life, people are going to say and do things that are offensive or hurtful, and that's the human condition.

Dr. James Dobson: Danae, if there was only one message that girls could walk away with after reading *Let's Walk the Talk*, what would it be?

Danae Dobson: It pays to follow Jesus. When I was going through my awkward stage at age 12 to 14, I had a mentor, Ann Kimmel. Some of your listeners may have heard of her. And she was a popular author and speaker at the time. And so she used to write me little notes and cards and she saw a lot of herself in me, and she would often end her cards with those words, "It pays to follow Jesus." And at the time I thought, "Well, that makes sense, but I hadn't really lived it." Now I've lived long enough where I know from experience that that is absolutely true. It does pay to follow Jesus. It's the most gratifying feeling in the world to know that you're following His plan and even if things don't go the way you want them to, you're still headed in the right direction, and there's just a unbelievable peace that comes as a result of that.

Dr. James Dobson: And that's more valuable than anything in the world to you, isn't it?

Danae Dobson: It sure is.

Dr. James Dobson: Because you get your sustenance for every day that way. Well, Danae, thank you for coming and being our guest. Thank you for writing this book and for the heart that's in it, the heart for the Lord that's in it. That was your primary motive, I know. And I think girls are going to be very interested in what you had to write and will also get a lot of big-sister advice for these years. And so-

Danae Dobson: I hope so.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Danae Dobson: I'm looking at a picture that I gave you that's right to your left of where you're sitting, and it's a picture of you and me. It's black and white. I'm about five years of age, and you're holding me up, and around the frame it says "My dad, my father, my hero. Love, Danae." And that pretty much sums it up.

Dr. James Dobson: I love you, babe. Thanks for being our guest.

Danae Dobson: My privilege.

Danae Dobson: Thank you for listening today. My parents and I and the staff at Family Talk so appreciate your friendship and your prayers and support. Roger, why don't you close us out?

Roger Marsh: Happy to do so, Danae. And I want to take a moment to thank you for joining us on the program today. This has been such a treat, and I know our listeners have enjoyed having you here as well, so thanks for being with us. Now. If you'd like to learn more about Danae Dobson or her book called *Let's Walk the Talk*, simply visit the broadcast page on your Family Talk app, or visit drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. Danae's book shares Christ-centered insights to many of the challenges teens face. She approaches these topics in a big-sister conversation style, and I'm sure many girls will really be inspired by her book. Again, you can find information on Danae Dobson's book, *Let's Walk the Talk*, by going to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

And while you're on our website, you can also check out the book Dr. Dobson mentioned today. It's the book called *Bringing Up Girls*. His book is written from the extensive research he's done over the years as a psychologist. Dr. Dobson seeks to equip parents to face the challenges of raising a daughter in today's world so she can be a healthy, happy, and successful woman. Now we'll be happy to send you a copy of *Bringing up Girls* as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute today. So go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk, and click the link at the bottom of the broadcast page. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

You know as parents, we want our daughters and our sons to have bright futures. In our world today, that can sure be a loftier goal than what was possible only decades before. Families are struggling to put food on the table. A college education does not guarantee you a good job anymore, and kids are facing unthinkable problems at younger and younger ages.

Can you imagine issues like gender confusion when you were four and five and six years old? So as a parent, what are you to do? Well, one place moms and dads can start is by helping your children develop a biblical worldview and a solid relationship with the Lord. This better equips boys and girls with the right tools to navigate a broken culture that surrounds them and can be very confusing.

Here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we have established the new Dobson Culture Center to help you in this quest. The mission of the DCC is to strengthen Christians by teaching that a biblical worldview is the foundation for marriage, parenting, and preserving human dignity. If we as believers stand for truth, even when it is hard, we can have a positive impact on culture and provide hope and a better future for generations to come.

To start receiving the “Lighting Up Culture” newsletter from the Dobson Culture Center, simply click the Culture Center tab at the top of our homepage at drjamesdobson.org. I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for listening, and thanks for making Family Talk a part of your day. 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 Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.