



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: True Family Success

Guest(s): Joe Gibbs

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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 today we are bringing you one of Dr. James Dobson's favorite conversations, featuring NFL Hall of Fame coach Joe Gibbs. Now, you likely know Coach Gibbs as a three-time Super Bowl champion with the Washington Redskins in the 1980s and the 1990s. He was also the owner of a NASCAR racing team that tasted victory at the Daytona 500. By any measure the world uses, Joe Gibbs is a picture of success. But that's not the whole story. Coach Gibbs sat down with Dr. Dobson to talk honestly about the ups and downs of his life, including the mistakes and heartache that came before the trophies. He'll share why family must always come before career, and how God remained his one constant through it all. So let's join Dr. James Dobson and his guest, Coach Joe Gibbs, right now on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Can I call you coach? Is that alright?

Joe Gibbs: Please. I tell everybody, once you've been a coach, you've been called everything. Yeah, believe me

Dr. James Dobson: Is that right?

Joe Gibbs: Coach is great.

Dr. James Dobson: People still call you coach?

Joe Gibbs: Yeah, they do. As a matter of fact, my grandbabies call me coach. And so I get a kick out of it.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you have done many successful things, but none more than being an assistant coach at USC for the Trojans.

Joe Gibbs: I can remember. I can remember. I knew you were at USC...

Dr. James Dobson: USC under Coach John McKay, right?

Joe Gibbs: You're a Trojan, absolutely. And it was great. Those were great years. I got so many stories. See, that was a dream of mine because I actually grew up there in the Whittier down in Norwalk area. And I wasn't good enough to go to SC. Dadgummit, you didn't recruit me. But I went to junior college and everything. And then, of course, it was always a dream of mine to go back and coach there, and you got a chance to do that.

Dr. James Dobson: You know what? It was always a dream of mine that after you left the NFL, you would come back to USC and take one of those open coaching positions. But I'm giving up on it. I don't think we're going to make it.

Joe Gibbs: Yeah, I think our last couple offers, Pat looked at me and said, read my lips. No, you can go. I'm staying here with the grandbabies, so we're not going to do that one.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, it is so good to have you here. After being so successful in coaching and then going into the NASCAR experience, one would get the idea that success has just followed you all the days of your life. That really hasn't been true, has it?

Joe Gibbs: No, it hasn't been true. As a matter of fact, I tell people, read this book and I can save you 10 years of misery. Because what's in this book is all the mistakes. And I think it's kind of funny, Jim, because you do wind up, if you wind up winning Super Bowls, a lot of the struggles on how you get there and a lot of the heartache that we go through in life, it kind of gets lost because eventually you win a Super Bowl, and then, of course, same thing in Winston Cup. But certainly Pat and I have had our struggles along the way, and that's what's documented in the book.

Dr. James Dobson: Why did you leave football?

Joe Gibbs: I tell you, I left football because I loved it. It was one of the greatest jobs in the world. Let me say this. It took me about four long months of just really heart-searching, Pat and I, going away as a family and really thinking about it because that's all we had done as a family. See, when you coach, the whole family coaches.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, and it's year-round, too.

Joe Gibbs: Yeah, Pat ran everything at home. She took care of the boys, and I really coached, and the boys would come to camp and everything. I really left because both boys had gone off to college, and I thought they would always kind of be with me. They left, and I went to football. And all of a sudden, I became a football recluse. And I'd missed J.D. playing most of his football career. I always wanted to see him play. And I did get to see him play a few times, took helicopters and stuff. But Coy was playing at Stanford. And I said, look, you know, at this point in my life, it's really family. I think it's time for me to step out, go see him, which I did. I went to see him at Stanford, play every game at

Stanford for the next two years. And then really for family reasons, I think it was the right thing. I was scared to death to do it. Once I stepped out, it was almost like God just gave me purpose.

Dr. James Dobson: How hard was it to walk away from the glamour and the excitement and the adrenaline and the money and the fame and fortune, all the things that success in the NFL means? How difficult was that?

Joe Gibbs: Very difficult. I think because, like I say, as a profession, you grow up in it. You actually live it. It monopolizes a lot of your life. If you had asked me Monday evening at 10 o'clock during the football season, what are you doing? I could have told you. That's how structured my life was. But I really think it's one of the great jobs in the world. I loved it. But I really felt like it was time for me to probably do something else. Thirty years of almost anything is enough to, I think.

Dr. James Dobson: Joe, how did your relationship with Pat survive the all-encompassing experience of coaching in the NFL?

Joe Gibbs: I really think, Jim, that... Pat's a special person. And I think one of the things I never recommend for a coach, a lot of my players say, hey, I want to go into coaching. I never recommend that if they've been married for a while. It's almost like you've got to grow up in it. Because for six months out of the year, I've got to tell you the truth, I slept at the office three nights a week. She ran the whole show. I got to see the boys on Friday night. I mean, it's a very structured deal.

Dr. James Dobson: It takes a special woman to do that.

Joe Gibbs: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: Did she complain about it?

Joe Gibbs: No. It was her life. And she kind of, matter of fact, when I came home, after about three days, she'd go, shut up and get out of here. But she was used to kind of running the show. But, I mean, really and truly, it was a partnership. And now there was a lot of advantages to coaching, too, besides that me being away and everything. The boys got to come to camp. There's so many things we got, the great thrill of victory and all that kind of stuff. Pat got to enjoy some things, too.

Dr. James Dobson: Kids on the sidelines.

Joe Gibbs: Yeah, kids on the sidelines. But I got to tell you, Pat is an unusual person. I think most coaches' wives are.

Dr. James Dobson: She had her struggles, too. She had a very serious surgery at one point. What was that, about 20?

Joe Gibbs: 1980, yeah. 1980, came home. Pat shared with me that night, I always remember that, that the doctor said she had an acoustic neuroma, which is a serious brain tumor. And the bottom line, you know, when we came out of that surgery, she had paralysis on one side of her face. It's been, as I shared in both books, it's been one of the toughest things we've ever had to deal with. And certainly she encourages me so much. She's so strong for this fact. She always said to me, she says, look. I know that the Lord has promised me in the end everything is going to work out the best for me.

Dr. James Dobson: That's the key to your life, Joe. You really are serious about your love for the Lord.

Joe Gibbs: Well, I am, Jim. And I think the reason the book, and I had a spiritual father one time, he made a great statement. I say, I think I may write a book on that first one. He goes; do you have anything to say? And so what prompted me on this second one was the fact that so many people walk up to me. And I guess, think about the way the world sees things now. They walk up to me because I've, what, won Super Bowls and won Winston Cup championships. They don't really know a lot about my background, but they will say to me, hey, Joe, how do I become successful? Well, when they say that, I know what they're meaning. See, they look at me and they say, how do I make money and I become president of the company or win football games or whatever it is in my profession? And really what – I wrote the book for this reason. Yes, that's very important, occupation and making money, finances. There's four other key areas that they're not even thinking about when they ask me that. And that's the same thing I did when I came out of school. I was interested in those two things because the world told me if I get enough of that money and enough football games, I'm going to be happy. Well, then halfway through the first few years there, I said, well, wait a second. If I don't have somebody to enjoy this and go through it with me, relationships, life's going to be a disaster. So I had relationships to it.

Dr. James Dobson: That is the bottom line for this program because it's a message that absolutely must be heard. You are, Joe, a man's man, and you fell into a man's trap. How many men do we know who have become obsessed with work? And so driven to accomplish those things you just talked about that they lose sight of everything else that's important, including their relationship with the Lord. They lose their families. They wake up in their 40s or 50s. Some of them never wake up. And by then, it's too late.

Joe Gibbs: I got to tell you; it's a natural trap. And people say, well, how does this? It happens this way. The world says. And how does it say? How does it sell it? Well, it has all written material, TVs, movies, all these different ways. And basically it says those two things. This will make you happy. And so, Jim, you're right. Most of us charge out through life, and we go 10, 20, 30, 40 years, and all of a sudden, I look back and I go, oh, my gosh. As I accomplish these things, I realize that's not the most important thing in my life, really. What's the most important thing Pat and I are going to leave on this earth? They're going to be

our kids, our grandkids, and the influence we're having on others.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I thank God that you learned that. I had the same temperament that you have, still do. And I'm a type A, and I'm a go-for-it person. And I got pretty excited about life when I was young, and there were opportunities out there for me that I never would have anticipated. When I got out of graduate school and wrote *Dare to Discipline*, I mean, everything came at me. And Shirley was a little less tolerant of that than Pat. Shirley, in a very loving way, just said to me, "That's not going to work. You're making a big mistake." And she helped pull me back. I would have probably made an enormous mistake in our family and in our life if it hadn't been for her and for my father. And also because of my love for the Lord. And I began to see things in Scripture, and He began talking to me. But, boy, I tell you, it is a trap. It is a trap. It looks so right. And in my case, I had the excuse of doing it for the Lord's work. I mean, I had it all rationalized. Of course it's important for me to do all these things. And Shirley was so loving in the way she approached me. She didn't nag me, but she really did keep me from making a mistake because I had everything I needed to be a workaholic.

Joe Gibbs: I sat across the table from a self-made billionaire. that owned the Washington Redskins, Jack Kent Cooke. And the only time I ever saw tears in his eyes, and he said to me, "Joe" he said, "I've messed up." And what he was referring to is relationships. He'd had four marriages, a lot of broken relationships in there. And here was a guy that had done what the world said: made all the money, was a billionaire, and had climbed the ladder to success. And yet I always remember that about Mr. Cook in that meeting we had.

Dr. James Dobson: J. Paul Getty, who at one time was the richest man in the world, said he'd made a mess out of his life. Even though he made all that money, he couldn't figure out how to make it with a family. The word excess really describes you. If people look at you, they would think the word success would be the defining word. But you say excess was the defining word.

Joe Gibbs: Yeah, it was. And I was so driven, just like you talked about. I mean, I definitely wanted to be successful. And I kind of fell into the plan. And like I said, mine was strictly through hard knocks. And that's what's in this book. I made, in almost all these areas, I made serious mistakes. And thank God that there was a loving God there. And I had a little spiritual father and rededicated my life in 1972. And then what started happening in my life, I started discovering through God's word that He really is our head coach. You and I are playing the game of life, the biggest game of all. He's our head coach. And He left a game plan here. I was playing the game without studying the game plan. I was a fool. I jumped off into finances.

Dr. James Dobson: You almost had to declare bankruptcy.

Joe Gibbs: Well, I really was technically bankrupt. The biggest mess in the world, Jim.

Dr. James Dobson: A million dollars in debt?

Joe Gibbs: Millions. And that's a testimony, too, because no matter how big the mess is, and this is one of the biggest. I sat with two attorneys and two accountants one day, and we spent six hours and couldn't add up everything this partnership was in. And I was the only guy that was left. Everybody else filed bankruptcy and left.

Dr. James Dobson: What kind of business was it?

Joe Gibbs: It was real estate investment. And I showed you how smart I am. I said, well, you can't lose in real estate. But, you know, if I'd only followed one principle in God's book. You know, He says in there, you know, God speaks over 2,300 times about finances. Why? Because he knew money was going to be important.

Dr. James Dobson: Absolutely. Talked more about money than he did about heaven.

Joe Gibbs: Amen. And so in God's Word it says, never co-sign the law unless you're willing to pay it off. If I just followed one principle, I could have saved myself so much heartache. But, you know, I think I needed to go through that. And the great thing about belonging to the Lord, I sat down after that was over with, that experience. And Pat and I at one point took everything we had, gave it to a bank. They paid our bills, and we got a per diem to live on. That's how bad it was. But when we got out of that four and a half years later, I sat down and wrote 15 things that I learned through that experience. And number one on that list was listen to your wife.

See, I found a way to kind of make her do that. She didn't, you know, those are the times I've gotten the biggest messes in my life. You know, when I don't listen to godly counsel, I don't listen to my mate, and then I try and kind of, because I'm, you know, forceful, find a way to get her to agree to it instead of us just mutually agreeing. So anyway, there's some real lessons in the book, and that's the real reason why I wrote it, because I think I do get so much attention, so much of it I laugh at. You know how smart I am. Most people out there don't. And so I kind of laugh at the way the world pictures that too.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, but NASCAR is doing fine for you.

Joe Gibbs: NASCAR, I think maybe that's why God was putting me through those things. I think I look at that. Now we have a successful business. I'm so paranoid now. I've got so many people that look over. I know I'm not a good businessman. And so I have so many people looking at it that you probably recognize some of the people I have them come in as consultants. We meet once a month. We really are very careful. And J.D.'s a much better businessman than I am. He kind of oversees everything. But it's a big business now, and we're racing cars all across America, and it's a big deal for us.

Dr. James Dobson: Have you learned to control the pressures to not continue the tendency to overwork yourself?

Joe Gibbs: I'm much better now about that. I think football is a unique life. You drive yourself. I was the technical person. People were waiting on me. When you're in that role, there's always 11 people, and everybody's counting on you. The position I'm in now is more of a businessman. Helping to pick the people. Yes, I work with people problems, but I'm not the technical person. And the guys today that in this sport, the crew chiefs are what they're called. They're just same as coaches. They go on Thursday, come back on Sunday. They have their guys that go with them, and they technically make the car run. Those are the guys that have the pressure on this. So it's a different kind of pressure. I tell people paying the bills. That's a pressure, but I have a different pressure now.

Dr. James Dobson: All right, Joe. Let's address the guy out there who's making the same mistakes that you and I were inclined to make. There are a lot of them, and there are a lot of women listening to us today who are saying, if only my husband knew this, if only he would listen. Maybe they'll get a CD of this, and maybe they'll listen to the former coach of a Super Bowl champion. Maybe you'll have some influence with them. Give your best shot.

Joe Gibbs: My best shot would be this. To me, most of life, I've told you how sharp I am, most of life to me is common sense. And to me... I think I can prove to almost anyone that God exists. If I look at this watch, and I can tell anybody out there, if you look at that watch, do you think there's a watchmaker? Everybody goes, just through common sense. Yeah, absolutely. Complicated. Now look at the world, the way this world is crafted. And so at nine years old, I'm kind of looking around at school. I'm being told that two amoebas happened to hit in a muddy puddle of water two billion years ago, and I was in an accident. I wasn't real sharp, but I looked at that, and I said, I don't like the sound of that. And in church, my grandmother and mother had me in church. The pastor there was telling me something totally different. He said, there was a God. He loved me. He made me. He crafted me. He knit me together in my mother's womb. He made me special. I got up and went forward in church and said, hey, that makes more sense to me. I would say to anybody...

Dr. James Dobson: How old were you?

Joe Gibbs: Nine years old. I would say to any man, woman out there, if you just think about the world and the way this is put together, there has to be a world maker. Once I made that commitment to Him and asked Him to come into my life. Okay. Then the mistakes I made, but still veering off and chasing my own desires, knowing when I've discovered that this book, the Bible, the Bible that God left here for our game plan, our game plan for life is a relevant book. Many people out there I feel like are struggling or arguing Democrat, Republican, liberal. I'll tell you what I want to know. I don't want to know what they think. I want to know what God thinks.

Dr. James Dobson: Absolutely.

Joe Gibbs: So this book is a relevant book. Now think about this. If we're going to live life and God put us here, He covers it all. He covers every aspect and everything we need to know. If you want to know something about relationships, He tells you.

Dr. James Dobson: It's all there.

Joe Gibbs: It's here. And so I would say to any person out there, I would say, look, I've built a business. I've been involved. Most people wouldn't argue with me on that, I'm game. If you're a team builder out there, if you're a man and you're trying to build a business team. I need to be studying God's Word, what He says about who was the greatest team builder of all time. Jesus Christ had three years to change the world. Was He good at picking people? He picked 12 guys that nobody—there wasn't one of them, a star. And He took them, and the way He talked and communicated, which is big in team building and all those other aspects, He covers it all in here. So if I'm a businessman, I need to be studying this Word and what God has to say about it.

Dr. James Dobson: Let me add my best shot to what you just said, Joe, and I agree with you completely. And I want to speak particularly to the guy out there who's a Christian, but he's kind of nominal. He goes to church, but he hasn't really taken it seriously. He hasn't made the commitment. The best reason I can give him, which is what hit me when my daughter was born, is that if I don't do my job in terms of introducing my kids to Jesus Christ, if I miss it there, I'll never see them again after I die. This is the end of it. Maybe I'll make it to Heaven. Will they? And that, for me, is the greatest motivation in life. This life is merely a preparation for the next. And if you get that priority right, nothing else comes close. Everything else is just sort of marking time.

Joe Gibbs: If we're going to be playing this game, we're going to play it forever. One night I was up talking to Coy one night, and I was sharing with him a couple things like I do when he goes to bed. And I was talking about Heaven, and we were reading a little bit about it and musicians and harps and all this stuff. Here's a kid racing bikes and all these kind of things. He looks up at me and he goes, "Dad, I don't think I'm going to like Heaven." And I said, "Coy, why would you say that?" And he goes, "Playing a harp?" He says, "I'm not there." I said, "Let me tell you something, Coy. We're going to have to leave this at the guy because if it's playing a harp, I'm not sure I'm going to be excited about it either. You know what I think heaven's going to be? God made us this way. He made us competitive, right? He sure did. I think it's going to be some thousand-year football games. It's going to be some thousand-year races. And if not, he's going to work a miracle in us."

Dr. James Dobson: And I'm going to make the touchdowns this time, right?

Joe Gibbs: Amen. I may even be a star up there. You're going to carry the ball.

Dr. James Dobson: We are made a little different than women. And, you know, that competitive edge is there. And for some guys, a whole lot more than others. If our listeners, the men out there, are among those that are driven from within. Be careful. That's dangerous. You can make the biggest mistake of your life. That's what you're trying to say in *Racing to Win*, isn't it?

Joe Gibbs: All men have a desire, I think, to really do something great. And I see great pastors, and people have great visionaries like yourself. But I think if we're not careful, that drive, it needs to be channeled. And we need to be studying. We need to know what the game plan is. And like you said, Jim, I made a rededication in 1972 just off what you're talking about. There may be some men out there that said, hey, look, yeah, I believe in God. I have a personal relationship, but I'm not on fire. We need to get in God's Word. Serious prayer, Bible study, and get with a group of people.

Dr. James Dobson: And you're using your present responsibility in NASCAR to win people to the Lord inside that sport, aren't you?

Joe Gibbs: We have a dynamic chance for opportunity inside the motorsports. Think about this. We're going to 36 cities, moving all around the country, taking a lot of people that have real good testimonies. And the people there come for three and four days. They have nothing to do. They're ready to listen. We're doing some exciting things inside of motorsports.

Dr. James Dobson: Bible studies.

Joe Gibbs: Bible studies at race shops. We have a full-time chaplain at our race shop, Bob Dyer, and he works with all of our people. We have Bible studies each week. We have small group studies.

Dr. James Dobson: You led Dale Jarrett, one of your drivers, to the Lord, didn't you?

Joe Gibbs: Well, actually, what happened, Dale Jarrett and Jimmy Maker, our crew chief and driver, the famous driver, Dale Jarrett, They came on board with us, and it happened to be the year that we won the Super Bowl in Minnesota, and we went to the Super Bowl. They came to the Super Bowl chapel service, and I'll always remember that. And in that service, when it came time to make commitments to Christ, they stood up, and both Kelly and Patty stood up, too, and it was one of the greatest... it was one of the greatest nights I think I've ever been part of.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, it is a pleasure to have you here. I've loved you and appreciated your friendship for all those years. And anytime you write a book, you come back, will you?

Joe Gibbs: There's so many people praying for y'all. I think you're helping to change the world. And I'm praying in America. We need a moral awakening. That's what I'm praying for.

Dr. James Dobson: That is the only thing that's going to save us. *Racing to Win* is the name of the book. Subtitle is *Establish Your Game Plan for Success*, not excess. But success. And I recommend this book to our listeners. Now, you talked a lot in this book about going too fast and overworking. You're going to run out of here. You're on a wing and a prayer literally today trying to get to where you're going.

Joe Gibbs: Today's probably not the best day for me to be talking about that. I got up at 3:30, and we're going to go all day and race cars this afternoon to Phoenix. But it's amazing the way you can get around the world.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I got up at 4:15, so I don't know if I'm any better.

Joe Gibbs: I've got my priorities. We're kind of enjoying things as we go now.

Dr. James Dobson: Blessings to you. Give a hug to Pat for me.

Joe Gibbs: Thanks, Jim. I will.

Roger Marsh: Success and excess, just one letter apart. But a world of difference between them. Coach Joe Gibbs won championships on the field and on the racetrack but his real legacy is coming home to his family and to the Lord. You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk as we featured a candid conversation Dr. Dobson had with Hall of Fame football coach Joe Gibbs. Now, if you missed any part of today's program or if you'd like to share it with a friend, remember you can listen again and pass it along by visiting JDFI.org. Now, the conversation you just heard is one small piece of a much larger mission here at the JDFI. Every day, the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute is laboring to preserve and promote the family and the biblical principles upon which it is built: to introduce as many people as possible to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to defend the sanctity of human life and religious freedom in a culture that too often forgets their worth. Your donation of any amount today makes this work possible, and we are grateful for every friend who stands with us. To give securely, go to drjamesdobson.org, or you can also visit jdfi.org. They are one and the same. You can also speak with a member of our constituent care team. That number to call is 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Or if you prefer, you can send your donation through the U.S. Postal Service. Our ministry mailing address 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 spending some time with us today. Be sure to join us again next time right here for another 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.