



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Making the Most of Ordinary Days – Part 1

Guest(s): Shirley Dobson and Gloria Gaither

Air Date: October 1, 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 we're bringing you a very warm conversation featuring Dr. Dobson and two remarkable women, Shirley Dobson, of course, his wife, and Gloria Gaither. Now, this is a recording that goes all the way back to a book that Shirley and Gloria wrote back in 1983. The book is called *Let's Make a Memory*. Shirley Dobson, of course, was Dr. Dobson's wife for nearly 65 years. She served as the chair of the National Day of Prayer Task Force for 25 years and is the author of several award-winning books. Gloria Gaither is a celebrated speaker, teacher, and award-winning lyricist. You've probably sung a Bill and Gloria Gaither song or two in your lifetime. But back when Mrs. Dobson and Gloria Gaither wrote their first book together, they were busy moms raising kids and literally in the thick of it all. 22 years later, *they teamed up again on a sequel, Making Ordinary Days Extraordinary*, and sat down with Dr. Dobson to look back on those parenting years and to talk about what really matters once the children have grown. So get ready for a heartfelt discussion that is timeless in nature. You will not want to miss a minute of what Dr. Dobson has to say with his guests, Shirley Dobson and Gloria Gaither, on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, Shirley and Gloria, it is a real pleasure to have you back to talk about a similar subject.

Gloria Gaither: Thank you. It's good to be alive.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. I want to know what the last 22 years has meant to you, and especially as you look back on what we were talking about there. When you were a full-time mom, each of you, well, you weren't full-time. You had a lot going on in your lives, but you were giving a good part of your lives to your children. How do you feel about that era? When you think

back, on the responsibilities of all that it means to raise children. Are there warm memories, or do you have different perspectives on it?
Gloria, take a run at it.

Gloria Gaither: I was thinking about the awards. They don't mean much compared to three kids and watching them give birth to their children.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, you say that very easily. Do you really mean that?

Gloria Gaither: I really mean that.

Dr. James Dobson: I mean, you've had a lot of accolades. You've been very, very successful in music and writing and other things. That does not compare. compete with or compare with the responsibilities of raising kids?

Gloria Gaither: The product of the whole philosophy of your life is whether or not somebody else will pick up on it. And the somebody else that you have the most primary responsibility for are the kids that grow up in your household. So Bill and I, early on, when we were trying to do prioritizing, we used to say to each other, if we save the whole world and lose our kids, we will have lost.

Dr. James Dobson: Shirley, when you compare the responsibilities of motherhood with the other things you've accomplished and enjoyed in your life. Where does it rank?

Shirley Dobson: Oh, it definitely ranks number one. In fact, when I was preparing for this broadcast and kind of perusing through the book, I actually got a lump in my throat and felt a sense of sadness that those years are over, parenting years are over. And when you think about taking a small child and, you know, they come to you with a blank slate and being able to mold that little child and to put into them, you know, so many things. And when you realize that you have an eternal soul there that you can mold, not only for God, but just the character of that child, it's awesome to think of it.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, the responsibility comes with an awful lot of stress and pain, too. I mean, raising kids is not the easiest thing anybody ever did. Talk to the women right now with all these kids, and they always need something, and they make messes and their noses run, and you can never feel like you have gotten it done. What do you say to those that are there saying, fine for you to say now that you've gone on to these other things. But I'm on the battlefield every day.

Shirley Dobson: And thinking, you know, I'm a college graduate, and I have a teaching credential, and I could be out full-time teaching, and here I am with, you know, all these messes and kids. And, you know, my whole life is 100% dedicated to these kids. And I remember calling up your mother. And I was bemoaning the fact that, you know, all these problems with the kids and all. And she just paused and she said, "Shirley," she said, "these are the happiest days of your life. You don't see it now. But in looking back, you'll one day realize that this is the happiest time of your life." Not that there weren't days of frustration. There were. And not that there weren't times when you would like to maybe put motherhood aside and get into a career. Some women can do both. I don't know how they do it. But I feel like I gave 100% of my everything to my kids. And if I had it to do over again, you know what? I would give 110.

Dr. James Dobson: Would you too, Gloria?

Gloria Gaither: I'm not sure, at that point, you're not sure if you're being successful. I remember a thing that Bill did, a recording when our kids were babies. It was called, "I just have to be successful as this little boy's dad." I told about everything else. And when your kids are little, you think that. But then you look back now and say, I wonder if I was successful. But Shirley there's a wonderful day coming when one of your children will call you on the phone and they will say something like this, "Mother. How did you do this?" And we'll say, "Yes!"

But, you know, we had a funny, you were mentioning the book, *Let's Make a Memory*. And because our kids were entering the, I call the smart aleck stage of their life, nine and what we were saying, 13 or 14 or whatever. They used to have a thing after our book came out, and it got a lot of attention. And every time we went, they would say something about, oh, this was nice. How did you make a memory? Or, Gloria, would you make a memory? And so my kids picked up from that. So anytime we were at the supper table having a knockdown drag out over something, it happened in school or something, someone was bound to say, "Mother? Are we making a memory?"

Dr. James Dobson: Believe me, I've had my books thrown in my face too. Why don't you live what you write about? It's hard to do day by day.

Gloria Gaither: So unless everyone thinks we are perfect and we did this all right, I just want to set that straight. You know, Jim, I've been pondering the question in Shirley's answer. Maybe this is my new thing I'm learning, but I am coming to believe that God's will for my life is the interruptions. I remember praying when I was a kid for God's will for my life, and I sort of

thought it would be like a package on my path, and I did all the right things and went all the right places. I'd find this package on my path with a ribbon tied around it, and I'd untie it, and it would say, "Gloria, God's will for your life. Here's your husband and your children and your career." And I long ago discovered that God's will for my life was the path. Not the package on the path.

Dr. James Dobson: And certainly not the destination.

Gloria Gaither: And not the destination. But now I am coming to believe that God's will for our lives is the interruptions. And I think we choose careers and begin certain path directions just so that we will be on a certain track where God can interrupt us with those people. If I was a nurse, God would interrupt me on that path. If I'm a writer or a performer or a mom or whatever, and if moms that are hearing this can understand what I'm saying, I don't care what career you're in, it is the interruption. So if you're saying, I want a perfect house, I want to have supper on time, I wish I could do something with my career. Trust me, God's will for your life is the interruptions. Today, it may be a snotty-nosed kid. It might be, "Mommy, can we make some Play-Doh?" It could be your neighbor that rings your bell and she is not on your list and she says, "Could we pray my daughter's pregnant?" I don't care what it is, but I look back over my life now and I look at Scripture and if you look at the story of the people in Scripture, God's will for their life was "on the way to the road to Damascus, such and such happened." Or Philip comes to this Ethiopian eunuch. He didn't start that path to go to him. I really do believe God's will for our life is the interruptions.

Dr. James Dobson: In the midst of the interruptions, however, you've got to take care of those kids.

Gloria Gaither: Well, they are the interruptions right now, is what Shirley was saying. A lot of career gals are sitting out there saying, you know, like, I'm never going to do what's God's will for my life. Trust me, this is God's will for your life.

Dr. James Dobson: And it's going to be over very, very quickly.

Gloria Gaither: This interruption, this piano practice, this, you know, skateboarding whatever it is, this is god's will for this moment. The interruptions is where God works.

Dr. James Dobson: And God has something else for you when that job is done.

Gloria Gaither: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: Shirley, you and I used to talk about that a lot, that when this assignment is finished, and it will be very quickly, God has something waiting for you. And it's just amazing. Right on cue, the National Day of Prayer came along and fell on Shirley's shoulders. She wasn't looking for anything, but the Lord was ready with that next responsibility.

Shirley Dobson: And at first I didn't see it as an answer to prayer. I mean, I wasn't thinking of anything quite that big. I was thinking maybe of teaching a Sunday school class or something. But no question that that's where the Lord wanted me and it opened up just right on time.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, we've mentioned *Let's Make a Memory* a couple of times. It was an immediate success. Does that surprise you all considering the work that you did back there?

Gloria Gaither: You know, I remember when we wrote that book, Shirley, I don't know if it was in your presence or not, but when I took the manuscript to show to Bill, he said, "Oh, I don't know. I don't know if that'll sell. This is just dumb stuff everybody does." But both of us had a hunch.

Shirley Dobson: Thanks, Bill.

Gloria Gaither: You and I had a hunch that we were on our second generation of unparented kids. We are now on our third, where most of the time the family has broken or somebody is not present or whatever. And in some cases, the parents are just not there on either side. And yet we have these young couples that that are getting married to each other and want to do it different. They want to do it right, but they are not sure what that looks like. And we've gotten so many letters in these last intervening years of exactly that, young parents who said, thank you for fleshing out in a practical way what family looks like. I never would have thought to do this or that on my way to raising my kids.

Dr. James Dobson: As the title implies, your purpose there was to teach parents how to make memories with their kids. Shirley, why is it important to do that? I mean, who cares? Kids forget a lot of what they experience as children. So why go to the trouble, you know, to plan things with kids to make memories?

Shirley Dobson: Well, I think I told Gloria this when we were talking about doing this book. I grew up in a family that had absolutely no traditions, came from a dysfunctional family. It was all my mother could do to keep a roof over

our head and to feed us. And then I met Jim Dobson in college, and we were married, and your family was a Southern family that was just steeped in these wonderful traditions and I saw the value of that. And I saw the cohesiveness that that brought your family and the identity. The pace is so much more hectic today than it was 20 years ago and parents are just barely hanging on. And what we wanted to do with this book was to give simple ideas on ordinary days to make them extraordinary.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you got one step ahead of me because we were talking *about Let's Make a Memory*, and now that that book is no longer in print, you all have brought out a new edition of similar books, not the same. It's not a revision, really. It's a completely new little book. This one's called *Making Ordinary Days Extraordinary*. Gloria, give us the theme of this first book as you attempted to write it?

Gloria Gaither: Well, I think people think, I am not an artist. I don't do crafts. You know, I don't have time for that. We both work. There are all kinds of excuses. And what Shirley and I would really love to convince every mom and dad, and by the way, this book would be great for single dads because you don't have your kids a long time. You might have them for a weekend or whatever. And you can do some wonderful life-changing things in that.

Dr. James Dobson: For single moms, too.

Gloria Gaither: Or single moms. But I think all of the parents I talk to say, you know, I can't do that. I'm not handy. We wanted to convince you that with just stuff you have around the house, not any great amount of effort, you can just make something. And, Jim, I want to take exception with one thing you said. I think kids do remember a lot of what they grew up with.

Dr. James Dobson: Nobody comes on this show and tells me, Gloria, that I don't know what I'm talking about. You can't do that.

Gloria Gaither: Oops.

Dr. James Dobson: That I'm wrong. Oh, they remember a lot. And it goes into a memory bank. You know, it's down there someplace. But many kids can't tell you a lot of what happened before they were seven years of age.

Gloria Gaither: You know, I think just one incident, though. happens that intersects your life. I'll give you an example when I was, I couldn't have been more than four or five. I have this vivid memory of being with my cousin at my grandmother's house. And she had this huge garden and she pretty much let us get by with next to murder. And she said, okay, you guys can play

with anything in the garden that is too ripe. So, I mean, to tell that to a four-year-old, we went out and we picked, you know, two big cucumbers and two old carrots and stuff like this. And we made mud pies and we actually chopped these real vegetables, like I'm remembering this in detail, into our mud pies and our salads. And then there was this container. There was this wonderful water that we could mix the dirt with right there by the garden. And so we are got our big old coffee can and we're stirring up this mud. And my grandfather came out and said, "Where'd you kids get that water?" And we said, "Right there, that wonderful container. Is this great?" And it was kerosene.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, brother.

Gloria Gaither: So, okay. I mean, kids do remember like small incidents like that. And that was, you know, to be trusted with that. We also took the wallpaper that grandmother trimmed off of the end of her rolls of wallpaper and wallpapered the shoonie that she let us do that and take the pace. And I remember mowing my initials in the backyard with Grandpa's push mower, things like that. Kids remember amazing details.

Shirley Dobson: And talking about single dads and single moms, in the book, there's one event that's called "Moonlight Magic." The psalmist David said, "the heavens declare the glory of God." So why not on a summer night, take a blanket out, spread it out in the backyard, lie down on the blanket with your kids and look up at the stars at night. And it just opens up an incredible discussion about the universe and how God created that. And just all kinds of things can come out.

Dr. James Dobson: So it becomes a spiritual journey as well.

Shirley Dobson: Right, right.

Dr. James Dobson: It's a little bit beyond twinkle, twinkle, little star, I wonder what you are. There's a whole lot more we can tell kids than that.

Gloria Gaither: And I think Shirley's hit on something really important in teaching children. I used to think that experience was the best teacher, but maybe as I've gotten older, I've decided experience is the only teacher. At least we have to make theory a part of our experience. And what she's talking about there, I think we like to call teachable moments. I mean, we can say, sit down, shut up, we're going to have worship, or we can take advantage of the really important things that happen or help to make them happen so that becomes a part of a kid's experience.

- Dr. James Dobson: So the suggestions in this book, *Making Ordinary Days Extraordinary*, often lead to a scripture or a scriptural principle.
- Gloria Gaither: Absolutely. And make it real. Help make it real. I remember planting bulbs, for instance, with my children and how dead they looked. I remember them commenting on surely these don't grow. And it was in the fall and it was going into winter. And why were we doing this? Which turned out to be a great spiritual metaphor that lasted all winter because come spring, I said, come out and let me show you what happened to those dead things we put in the ground. And that precipitated a great Easter discussion about unless a grain of seed fall into the ground and it abideth alone. And the kids to this day remember that, and they're grown.
- Dr. James Dobson: Is that in the book? It ought to be.
- Gloria Gaither: I think it will be in one of the books, but I'm not sure it's in this one.
- Shirley Dobson: And then another one that I really like in the book is School Day Surprise. And that's where you just choose an ordinary day, and you show up at lunchtime. Your kids don't know you're coming. It's a surprise. You grab one of them, take them to the front office, check them out just for the lunchtime and take them to one of their favorite restaurants. Or I like the idea of just packing a lunch and taking them on a picnic. Now that sounds very insignificant, but you know what? Your child will remember that forever. That would be a wonderful memory.
- Dr. James Dobson: Well, I think I'm going to have to retreat from this statement that they don't remember. Of all people I know that because I have an unusual memory. It's kind of legendary in our family. I remember a number of things from my second year and then third and fourth, and I found the Lord when I was three. And certainly I remember that as though it were yesterday. We're not just talking about young children. We're talking about those that are in the latter ages of childhood, before adolescence and so on. But I used to love to go hunting and fishing with my dad and him talking about the things that were out there in nature. My dad loved everything God made and it was just an experience in learning to be out there with him. There was something that happened between the two of us that was just marvelous. And, you know, I loved my mother greatly, too. She had a great impact on me. I think the dinners that she cooked and the family activities that we had and the traditions that we experienced. Shirley, you've carried that on in an absolutely beautiful way. As I look back on our child rearing days, I think those Sunday dinners that you cooked. when the whole family came over and there was

so much laughter and so much fun. And, you know, we would read a Scripture and we would pray together. Those are highlights for me, and I'm sure they are for you as well.

Shirley Dobson: Your mother was an incredible cook, and I still use a lot of her recipes, especially on the holidays. Your whole family was from the South, and they were wonderful cooks. Those recipes, Aunt T's apple cobbler and Aunt Lila's pound cake, they're just wonderful recipes to pass down. It's not the holidays without those recipes. Danae will say, "Mom, how come you didn't fix Aunt Lila's pound cake, or how come you didn't fix ambrosia?" Kids love the same things over and over and over, even when they're grown.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, it gets to the traditions again, because it is the sameness year after year that makes it a tradition, something that gives identity on that day. We're out of time, and yet I want to continue talking to these folks. Let's just keep it up, shall we? Because it's just one idea right after another that you all have provided. Gloria and Shirley, thanks for writing this one. And thanks for being here today, and we'll pick it up next time.

Gloria Gaither: Thank you.

Shirley Dobson: It's great to be here.

Roger Marsh: You know, there's real wisdom in what Shirley Dobson and Gloria Gaither shared today here on Family Talk. It's the sameness, the traditions we repeat year after year that give a family its identity and knits us together. And the beauty of that is in these moments, they don't require anything extraordinary, just a little intention on an ordinary day. You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk as we're revisiting a conversation Dr. Dobson had with his guests, his wife, Shirley Dobson, and their dear friend, Gloria Gaither. And this is only part one, so be sure to join us again next time for the conclusion of this discussion when Shirley and Gloria will share even more practical ideas for making memories with the children you love. By the way, if you missed any part of today's program or if you'd like to share it with a friend or a loved one, you can find it online at drjamesdobson.org. Here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we are committed to preserving and promoting the institution of the family and the biblical principles upon which it is based. If you'd like to learn more about how to be a more godly father, I want to share with you about a resource called "Strong Dads." It's an email series built to empower you in your role as a father because the impact you have on your sons and your daughters in the culture is immeasurable, especially right now. This resource is packed with valuable, biblically grounded encouragement from Dr. James Dobson himself to help you lead your family well. To sign up for this free email series, simply go to drjamesdobson.org. If it's easier, click in jdifi.org. They're one and the same. And search for that title, "Strong Dads." Again, go to drjamesdobson.org or jdifi.org.

Strong families are built on strong men and women who equip their children with the truth of God's word. This is a mission we share with you and we can only carry forward together. Every broadcast, every resource, every family reached depends upon the generosity of listeners who believe in this work. So join the team today. Your support of any amount helps us keep this ministry going strong. You can give a gift online when you go to jdfi.org. You can also call a member of our constituent care team. That number is 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Or if you prefer, you can send your tax-deductible 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. Once again, our ministry mailing address is the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Or if it's easier, just use those initials, JDFI for short. P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 80949.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and from all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time right here for the conclusion of this heartfelt conversation featuring Shirley Dobson, Gloria Gaither, and Dr. Dobson himself. They'll continue their conversation, making the most of ordinary days. It's coming up right 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.

Dr. James Dobson: Someone said, if you connect a boy to the right man, he seldom goes wrong. And I believe that to be true.

Roger Marsh: With today's Dr. Dobson Minute, here's Dr. James Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: If a dad and a son or a daughter can develop some common interest together, the rebellious years really shouldn't be all that troubling. I had that kind of relationship with my own father. I thought back to the very happiest moments of my childhood. How my dad and I would get up very early on a wintry morning, head about 20 miles outside of town to our favorite place. We'd park the car, we'd climb over a fence, and follow a little creek bed back to an area that I called the Big Woods. Those moments together with my dad were absolutely priceless to me. There was a closeness that made me want to be like him. To choose his values as my values. That's the power of a man, to set a kid on the right road.

Roger Marsh: For more information on this topic, visit drdobsonminute.org.