



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Building Intimacy with God

Guest(s): Chuck Swindoll and Shirley Dobson

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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 I'm so glad you've joined us today for this very special program. You know, in James chapter 4, verse 8, we read these comforting words, "Draw near to God. and he will draw near to you." What a beautiful promise that is. Our Lord doesn't just permit us to come close to Him. He invites us to. He wants an intimate relationship with each of us. But the question so many of us wrestle with is, how exactly do we build that kind of closeness with God in the first place? And why does it matter so much, not only for our own lives, but for the future of our nation as well?

On today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we're going to explore those very questions through the power of prayer. Making prayer a part of our daily lives isn't just a nice habit, it's essential. It's the lifeline that connects us to the heart of God. And as you'll hear on today's Family Talk broadcast, it may very well be the greatest hope we have for the healing of our nation. Now, what you're about to hear is a classic conversation featuring our own Dr. James Dobson, along with two very special guests, one you'll recognize right away. That's Dr. Dobson's beloved wife, Shirley Dobson. And the other guest is a longtime friend, a dear friend of the Dobson family, Pastor Chuck Swindoll. Now, what you're about to hear was recorded a couple of decades ago. Some of the discussion is going to look back on the events of September 11th, 2001, and refers to the years when Shirley Dobson was still serving as chair of the National Day of Prayer Task Force. And even though this conversation first aired many years ago, you'll be surprised, or maybe not, at how the scriptural truths that these friends are discussing remain just as relevant and timeless even today.

Shirley Dobson is nationally recognized for her leadership and her many contributions to organizations that advocate for the family. Beginning in 1991, she served as chair of the National Day of Prayer Task Force and served faithfully for 25 years. Through the efforts of that task force, tens of thousands of prayer gatherings were established and held all across the country. And our other guest today, Pastor Chuck Swindoll, has devoted his life to the practical teaching and application of God's Word. After serving in the United States Marine Corps, he went on to a ministry career that spanned more than 50 years.

His radio program, *Insight for Living*, is still heard all around the world, sharing a message of genuine hope and encouragement. Chuck is also the author of many beloved books, including *So You Want to Be Like Christ: Eight Essentials to Get There*, and that'll be the focus of today's conversation. Settle in and join us now for this rich and encouraging discussion about drawing near to the Lord. Here now, Shirley Dobson, Pastor Chuck Swindoll, and our own Dr. James Dobson here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, with us today is the chairwoman of the National Day of Prayer, Shirley Dobson. And welcome back, Shirls.

Shirley Dobson: It's very good to be back, Jim. Thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, the other guest is my great friend of 30 years, Dr. Chuck Swindoll. He's the founder and senior pastor of Stonebriar Community Church in Frisco, Texas, and is the author of many, many Christian books. Chuck, thanks for joining us today.

Chuck Swindoll: I'm glad to be with you, Jim and Shirley. It's going to be a great time together.

Dr. James Dobson: Chuck, I checked the record today, and you were a guest on this program for the first time in 1981.

Chuck Swindoll: I was a very young man back then.

Dr. James Dobson: Very young and filled with promise, right?

Chuck Swindoll: Well, I don't know about that. I was a very young man. You know, none of this seems all that real. You talk about a friendship that's been really for more than 30 years. It honestly seems like last year. We were sitting there in that little restaurant in Long Beach, and the four of us, you and Shirley and Cynthia and I, were laughing about so many things. Our kids were all real small, and you had started this brand-new radio ministry. And we had met at a conference, you may remember, in Seattle. And you said, let's get together, and I actually followed up on that. So we had some great times. It's been great ever since.

Dr. James Dobson: Chuck, going back to that first visit in 1981, I wonder if you remember what the subject of that interview was.

Chuck Colson: Okay, this is going to be an absolute guess, but I'm going to guess something about the family, marriage, home, family.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, you're right.

Chuck Swindoll: How's that for a guess?

Dr. James Dobson: It was about marriage, and I think it was— I believe it was before you published *Strike the Original Match*.

Chuck Swindoll: Oh, okay.

Dr. James Dobson: So I think you were thinking in those terms at that time. But it was a wonderful program and it was the beginning of a great friendship.

Chuck Swindoll: Well, thank you, Jim.

Shirley Dobson: You know, Chuck, I have to tell a story about you and Jim. I think as you're aging, you're getting to look more like each other.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, really?

Shirley Dobson: But anyway, this lady got on the plane and she was coming down the aisle and she spotted Jim and she recognized him. she stopped and said, "Oh, oh, oh, I know who you are. You're Chuck Swindoll." We all had a big laugh about that.

Chuck Swindoll: I got a better story than that, Shirley. I'm in front of our church meeting folks as they walk by, and one lady walks up and says, she had been there through the whole message. She says, "Oh, Dr. Dobson, I just want to tell you how much I appreciate your ministry." She says, "I've got your book here, and I'd like you to sign it." It was one of your books, Jim. And so I said, "Sure, give me the book." I signed it. She said, "Oh, thank you, Dr. Dobson. I've waited half my life to meet you." And I signed your book. The whole message, she thought she was listening to Jim Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: This is radio and not television, so I guess it's a natural mistake to make. Shirley, speaking of the passage of time, did you? know in 1991 that this is going to be the rest of your life that you were signing up for?

Shirley Dobson: No, I didn't. In fact, Vonette was at the National Day of Prayer for eight years, so I figured, well, six or seven years, you know, that would be a good ministry. If I had known it, I would have run down the street screaming, scared to death.

Dr. James Dobson: But the Lord still has His hand in your back.

Shirley Dobson: Apparently, apparently so.

Chuck Swindoll: That's often the way it is. The great things God plans, we go into it reluctantly and not knowing most of what's ahead, and nothing of what's ahead, but not knowing most of what it will require. Had we known all of those things, we probably would have never done it.

Dr. James Dobson: The greatest honor for us, Chuck, is that the Lord obviously had a plan, and I think for the three of us, He had a plan that's been unfolding ever since. Shirley, I want to explain on your behalf that there is no self-serving aspect to the National Day of Prayer. You're not trying to build a big organization or create some kind of legacy with this outreach. It is what it is. It's a deeply felt desire to

call the nation to prayer on behalf of the people and their leaders and the military and their families and their churches.

You and I, Shirley, are very concerned about our country right now, not only with regard to our security as a nation. but relevant to what we see as the retreat from morality and righteousness that is just gaining momentum. Chuck, are you reading the culture that way too?

Chuck Swindoll: Yes, there's no doubt about it, Jim. I just actually returned from one of the few conferences I do each year. And this was one that is for flag officers and their spouses, for people from Capitol Hill, for ambassadors that are in the D.C. area to come apart and to be together and to share their lives and to enter into each other's experiences. And I get the heartbeat of what is happening inside the Beltway by being there. And there is a definite drift away from things eternal. There is no doubt in my mind. Oh, I was thinking, as Shirley spoke a moment ago, remember the days following 9/11?

Dr. James Dobson: Yes.

Chuck Swindoll: I mean, we didn't even have to announce. Everybody was calling our church saying, when are we going to get together and meet? And we opened our doors to a time of prayer. We didn't have to guide anybody. We didn't have to explain to anybody. The place was packed that following Sunday with people whose hearts were beating heavily for the protection of our people and for the guidance for our nation and praying for our president and asking for protection from terrorism. I mean, it just came in like a flood. It's interesting that they didn't want an organization. They didn't need a big plan. They just said, we need a place to pray. And I'll tell you, we could have prayed for four hours. The spirit that was in that meeting, we still talk about it. It was electric.

Now, when I'm with these folks that I was with at this conference, believe me, they are at the cutting edge of decision-making. These are people who make decisions, and it impacts thousands of lives. And I'll tell you, these men and women that gather are people of prayer. They're the first to say, we may have stars on our shoulders, we may have the rank that causes other people to salute, or we may have a role in Congress that people admire, but we all need to say to each other, and we admit it, our needs are totally in the hands of God. And so we call on God for that.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, Chuck, I just returned from Washington and had a chance to meet with the kind of people you're talking about, some of them on Capitol Hill, some of them in the White House and otherwise. And I saw concern everywhere I went for the nation and its national sovereignty, and I heard it over and over again. Furthermore, in the last couple of weeks, my heart has been burdened, I mean heavy, as I have seen reports of spring break activities and the debauchery and the sexual immorality and the drugs and the alcohol and things that are occurring, and everybody seems to think that. That's okay. It just is further evidence to me that we're in a moral crisis in this country.

Chuck Swindoll: Yeah, there's no doubt about it. And when we read, even from ancient days, that God's people are to humble themselves and pray and seek God's face to have the nation healed, we realize this is nothing new. It has been on a long drift; the fallen nature of humanity is increasingly more evident. And it's now impacting our government, the ranks of the military, even churches across the land. The need for us to come back to that promise is incredibly important. It's of highest importance.

Shirley Dobson: And Jim, you said when you came back from Washington that no one, neither political party, had an answer for the problems that we face. And it's because it's not a military problem.

Chuck Swindoll: That's correct.

Shirley Dobson: It's not a governmental problem. It's a problem of the heart. It's a spiritual problem. This battle that we're waging is a spiritual battle, and it can only be fought on our knees. And I wonder what it's going to take for the American people to realize that. It's going to take a city that's going to be wiped out before we realize that we can't handle this on our own. We don't have the know-how. We don't have the weaponry. It is beyond us. Only God can solve this problem, and prayer is the hope for our nation. And my heart this year is that people will gather and put a prayer shield around this nation to protect it.

Dr. James Dobson: You and I have been praying about that in our personal prayer time, praying for this country, praying for our president, praying for our leaders on Capitol Hill, praying for the military. And you frequently refer to that prayer shield. That comes from Psalms, doesn't it?

Shirley Dobson: Yes, it does. In Psalms, it says, "The shields of the earth belong to the Lord." And I believe on 9/11 that He lifted that shield just enough so we could look evil right in the face and see what could really happen if He ever removed that shield from our nation. That's why it is so important for us to get on our knees and come before Him in humility and repentance and beg him for mercy because the Bible also says, "In your wrath, Lord, remember mercy."

Dr. James Dobson: Chuck, you have written a book called *So You Want to Be Like Christ? Eight Essentials to Get You There*. And you talk about prayer in this book. We don't have time for you to list the eight essentials, but give us a summary of the message of this book.

Chuck Swindoll: Well, I think it was important. It was important then and it still is to me that people understand that godliness doesn't come automatically. It doesn't just flow out of one's life, no matter how much one may love the Lord. I think there is the necessity for us to understand we must carry out responsibilities that are commanded of us in the Scriptures. And I touch on eight of those areas, and you're right. One of them is prayer, which I simply call calling out. And another is humility, bowing low. And the reason I wrote the book is because I think in this drift we've talked about, we become proud people. We begin to operate

independently. We complicate our lives with things that aren't essential. The tyranny of the urgent wins the day and silences the things that are important. We are not a people of self-control. We are not a people who surrender, who release our grip on our rights. I think it was Lou Holtz, the coach, who said 25 years of coaching, he's the one that led Notre Dame to 100 victories in 10 years. He said, "In my years of coaching, the difference between the athlete then and now, back then the athlete came with the desire to carry out his responsibilities and good teamwork as a player. Now it's all about rights and privileges." Isn't that interesting?

Dr. James Dobson: It is.

Chuck Swindoll: Even on the athletic field, back then it was about how can I work with this team and we together win this game. Now these are my rights. These are my privileges. That spirit of entitlement that has wrapped itself around us like tentacles. And so I wrote the book so people would understand becoming like Christ is not something that's just going to take place because you get older or because you've been in the church all your life. It will take place when you begin to apply the disciplines of the Christian life, simplicity and surrender and whatever.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, Chuck, some of those hundred victories came at the expense of my beloved USC.

Chuck Swindoll: Yeah, I knew you'd mention that.

Dr. James Dobson: Lou Holtz is a friend of mine because I've forgiven him for some of that. Oh, my. Well, I think our listeners can feel our hearts here. If there could be hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people calling out to God, saying, Lord, we have no resources that can deal with the problems that we're facing. There is only one answer, and that answer is a revival, a return, a renewal to the spiritual principles and understandings that have guided us and guided this country from the days of the Founding Fathers.

Shirley Dobson: That's right. We shouldn't just be praying for our nation on one day we should be praying regularly for our nation. And National Day of Prayer does have a program called Freedom Five, where we're asking people to spend five minutes a day praying for five centers of power, the government, the media, education, church, and the family, because we interact with some of those segments every day. And that's a way we can keep our country and those centers of power before the Lord in prayer.

Dr. James Dobson: Chuck, in a world of spiritual confusion where even many churches seem to have forgotten what Christianity is all about, I'm not indicting anybody, but it has happened in many places. I'm glad there is you, and I appreciate what you've done on the radio for all these years. Our programs, in fact, have been back-to-back for many years, and there's been a kind of partnership between us. I love you like a brother and appreciate you.

Chuck Swindoll: Well, thank you, Jim. I thought about you the other day when I was reading in 1 Timothy. I thought about you and Shirley. The second chapter begins with, "First of all, I urge that entreaties and prayers and petitions and thanksgiving be made on behalf of all. For kings, for all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity." Aren't those great words?

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, man, that's beautiful.

Chuck Swindoll: He says, first of all, that there be prayers and petitions and thanksgivings. And so I will, at this moment, step into the role of a fellow pastor and say to all of you who are pastoring churches, remember, first of all, lead your congregations in prayer. Prayer for our nation, prayer for our men and women who lead us as cities, as states, as a nation, and who make these huge decisions. Pray for those who give them counsel.

Dr. James Dobson: Chuck, I don't believe there's any more fitting way to close out this program than to ask you to pray for the nation. Pray for us, Chuck.

Chuck Swindoll: Almighty God, we pause to reflect on Your character as we seek wisdom for such a time as this. In these unsafe days, you remain all-powerful and able to protect us. In these uncertain times, You remain all-knowing, leading us aright. In the unprecedented events that we're facing, You remain absolutely sovereign. Our times truly are in Your hands. Therefore, Lord, our dependence on You is total and not partial. Our need for Your forgiveness is constant. Our gratitude for Your grace is profound, and our love for You is deep. Therefore, we ask that you guard and guide our president and all who serve the people of these United States. May uncompromising integrity mark their lives. And we also ask that You unite us as truly one nation under God. May genuine humility return to our ranks. And may that blend of integrity and humility heal our land as You have promised. In our Lord's name we pray. Amen.

Roger Marsh: The answers we're searching for were never meant to be found on our own but on our knees. That was the heartbeat of today's classic family talk conversation featuring our own Dr. James Dobson and his guests, Pastor Chuck Swindoll and Doctor's wife, Shirley Dobson. Now, if you'd like to go back and listen to today's program again or share it with a friend, just visit jdfi.org and we'll also have information about Chuck Swindoll's book that we talked about on the program as well. You know, today's conversation is just one example of the kind of trusted, faith-building content you'll find here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk each and every day. And I have some wonderful news to share with you. All throughout this month of July, we've been sharing with you about our special \$250,000 matching grant to double every gift you give. And thanks to your remarkable response, I'm delighted to share that we have already reached that goal. Thank you so much for your generosity. It's been an extraordinary encouragement to all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, and we are grateful beyond words. Now, while the match has been met, the mission continues. The Dr. James Dobson Family Institute is here to preserve and

promote the family, and we would be honored to have you partner with us in that mission today. To make a secure donation, go to jdfi.org, or you can write to us. Our ministry mailing address is the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, or JDFI for short, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs Colorado, the zip code 80949.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and on behalf of all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, thanks so much for joining us today. Be sure to 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.

Gary Bauer:

Do you know the 36 words that define exactly what America is all about? I hope you do. This is Gary Bauer with an American Moment. This is the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States. It's our birthday. And in that day of our birth, our Founding Fathers wrote the Declaration of Independence. I would urge you to read the whole thing. It's not that long. But I know, hey, we're all busy, right? So if you don't have a lot of time. Just read these 36 words. They're the first sentence in the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That's the central idea of America, my friends. Let's go over the words because they're important. We hold these truths, it says. Well, today is a day in our country and around the world of moral relativism. But our founders believed there were some things that were true and there were other things that were false. So they wrote "We hold these truths to be self-evident. That all men," it means all mankind, ladies, it includes you too. That all men are created equal and endowed by their government. No, no, it doesn't say by their government. It says "endowed by their Creator." And it's a capital C. They're referring to the God of the Bible. That is absolutely clear, my friends. "Endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights." Well, that's sort of an antique word. What does that mean, unalienable? Well, unalienable means that nobody, including your government, can legitimately take those rights away from you. In fact, the word unalienable means even something bigger than that. It means that you and I can't surrender. legitimately those rights, without ceasing to be God-created human beings. Unalienable rights, it says. Among these, life. The founders knew that without the right to life, the other rights were beside the point. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That seems pretty clear, but I got to say one more thing. Pursuit of happiness didn't mean the same thing then that it means now. The pursuit of happiness then was all about the meaning of happiness. And in 1776, if you go back and look at a Webster dictionary, happiness is defined as the state of mind that one can get only if they are living a virtuous life. My friends, this is the central idea of the American Republic. These 36 words, wherever these words have gone, they have brought more liberty and more opportunity and more freedom to more people than any competitive civilization in the history of the world. Thank God for these words, and thank God for the United States of America. You've been listening to an American Moment,

brought to you by the James Dobson Family Institute. This is Gary Bauer in Washington, D.C.