



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Women Who Win

Guest(s): Mary Crowley

Air Date: January 31, 2025

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 whether you're listening at home or on the go, you are in for something special today. We are bringing you a classic conversation featuring Mary Crowley, author of the book, *Women Who Win: Who Build a Business Empire by Believing in Stay-at-Home Moms*. Back in 1957, Mary founded Home Interiors and Gifts in Texas based on the simple idea that women selling home decor through party-style gatherings would be successful.

What began with modest sales grew into an extraordinary success story. By 1983, the company was doing \$400 million in business, powered by thousands of women working from their homes. The company became so successful that when they held a celebration, they filled an arena with 10,000 of their top saleswomen, and they featured Bob Hope and Billy Graham as special guests. But Mary's Secret wasn't just business savvy, it was putting priorities in the right order. Mary started every company meeting by reading Scripture, often turning to the Proverbs for wisdom about leadership.

And here's an interesting connection, Mary Kay Ash, who co-founded Mary Kay Cosmetics with a similar home party business model was actually Mary Crowley's sister-in-law. Now, in her book, *Women Who Win*, Mary addresses a challenge many women still face today, and that is a lack of self-confidence. Her message is both simple and powerful. You are designed for fulfillment and God has a plan for your life. Mary Crowley believed that by honoring God and serving others, women could find success both at home and in business. So let's listen now as Mary talks about those timeless principles with our own Dr. James Dobson on this special edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: I would like to say this is one of the most generous women I have ever met. She supports Christian causes all across this country, and your generosity is legendary, Mary. So you have taken what God has given you and shared it with so many causes that you believe in. But where did all that start? How'd you get into business?

Mary Crowley: Well, I got in business 27 years ago. Actually, I'd been in direct selling business before that, but now my kids were grown and I saw a need. There was a need for American women to decorate their homes with excitement and with care. And from a coordinated line of accessories. I found that women were not sure of what to do and I'd worked for furniture companies. And so we started the business to give women an opportunity to work from their homes, be there when the kids got home from school, and still use their creative genius, which God gave every woman. Every woman is a genius. Some just don't know it yet or haven't developed yet.

And this is the idea of the business. And we had twin goals. One was to honor God because I knew by then that if we didn't honor Him, we would not be successful. Now, that doesn't mean that people who do not belong to the Lord and there are lots of successful people "in the world," they can be successful. But if I've made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ as my Lord and my master that I cannot be successful if I do not honor Him. Somehow along the line, He'll let me fall flat on my face. And I've done that a few times too.

Dr. James Dobson: I believe that's true.

Mary Crowley: Absolutely. So it had to honor Him and then it had to bless and serve people. The whole world wants service. They can buy products. They can buy merchandise. They can buy lots of things. But we want genuine, caring, personal service. And that was our goal to do that. And in so doing to help the woman who was showing and selling our accessories to find fulfillment in herself and to have a fellowship of her sisters. America needs places where people can go to belong, to find a support team.

When our great-grandmothers came across the prairies, they had quilting bees and canning bees, and they had support teams for one another in their difficult times and in their joyous times. So we have built support teams all across America, and the fellowship is as important as the salesmanship. And so that's how we started. We started from our garage, very, very small. My son and my daughter and myself and a few friends, people that invested and believed in us. And it's grown beyond my wildest imagination and it's pretty wild.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's address some comments. To the woman who is at home where you were when you started, I don't know what your circumstances were, but let's suppose that she feels somewhat unfulfilled and somewhat frustrated. She wants to do something significant with her life. Maybe the kids now are in the teen years and she knows they're going to be gone before too long and she's wondering what now? What do you say to her? How does she begin to put it all together and find out who she is? Does that necessarily mean she's got to be successful in business like you are in order to find yourself?

Mary Crowley: No. No. Again, I come back to the measure of success for each person. Success is a moving target. When you've got little kids at home, sometimes it's just getting through the day. And then as they go into school and you begin to have other

time, and then it may be reading good books and getting yourself, your mind activated again. Maybe it's starting an exercise program. Whatever it is that the measure of success that makes you feel fulfilled, it's different for everybody. And each person has to learn to define their own, otherwise they are always trying to fulfill somebody else's plan.

Dr. James Dobson: Why do you think that moving target is so difficult for American women to hit? Why do you think so many American women are frustrated?

Mary Crowley: Because they are trying to find their measure of fulfillment in what they're hearing either on TV or maybe radio or reading in some magazine instead of trying to find out what God's game plan is for them. I heard a wonderful interview with Walter Payton not long ago, and he defined something that was so great. The interviewer asked him, "Is your measure of success a hundred yards gained in a game as is the measure of success for a ball game, for a running back?" And he said, "No. My measure of success is following the game plan designed for that game to the very best of my ability." I thought that was a wonderful way to illustrate-

Dr. James Dobson: It is good.

Mary Crowley: ... God has a game plan for my life, for your life forever, for every woman out there with little kids or big kids or no kids. And if somebody tried to just copy mine, they might get very frustrated.

Dr. James Dobson: Could it be-

Mary Crowley: I have a high energy level and I can do a lot of things. Others might not. We're all made differently.

Dr. James Dobson: Could it be that God's game plan for a particular woman would be to stay home and take care of three little kids under six years of age for this period of her life?

Mary Crowley: Oh, I-

Dr. James Dobson: Society is telling her that that's nobody's game plan. Could that be God's game plan for some people?

Mary Crowley: Well, He says that in His word. And then He also says that older women should help the younger women. And I think this is where, again, I was talking about a support team. A lot of young women with little children are feeling so alienated and so unsupported because maybe her parents or his parents do not live close. Society has not built a support team around them in our today's world. That's where they need to find a support team. They have to have fellowship with other women. And maybe it's a Bible class, maybe it's a home interior show, maybe it's coming in part-time, or maybe it's simply finding other group of women who have uplifting, motivating things to put in their hours.

Otherwise, sometimes we do recruit mothers with young kids because she's sitting there watching the daytime dramas and living in a fantasy world and that is no good for her. And so if we can enlighten her and lift her up and give her something to do part-time that will fulfill her desires and create, we try to develop her creative talents. Women want to be accepted, understood, and developed. They don't want to stay static. They want to be developed. So whatever, if you're sitting out there and you're thinking, "Well, I'm not being developed." Then you find something that develops your mind, your spirit, your being, and don't sit there and get caught in that daytime drama trap of fantasy world. That's the worst thing.

Dr. James Dobson: You're talking about soap operas?

Mary Crowley: I am. I am.

Dr. James Dobson: Well. That's terrible. It really is.

Mary Crowley: Well, but that's what happens to a lot of women who are home with little kids, Dr. Dobson. That's what happens to them. And so then just being at home with the children does not minister to their spirit or does not even help them to be good mothers, they must have a plan to be a successful mother and a successful wife and woman.

Dr. James Dobson: Mary, what do you say to the person who is very frustrated in their present job? Do you have any advice to a person who just feels they're in a dead-end trap?

Mary Crowley: Change it. Absolutely. Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: But it costs money. I'm making more money than I could make some place else.

Mary Crowley: Yeah. It's not making you happy. So what good is it?

Dr. James Dobson: But I got to feed my family.

Mary Crowley: Find another way to feed them. No, it isn't really worth it. If people are frustrated in their jobs, unless there is a real way that they can change the frustration in that job. If it's their attitude, then they better change the attitude. But if it's the job itself and there is no hope of fulfillment, then change the job. Life's too short and too wonderful to waste it on frustration. Now we'll have frustrations in all jobs. People need to realize that. There are days of frustration in any job and you can't expect a frustration-free job.

But at the end of the day, there must be something that you feel that you've accomplished in the lives of other people or in going forward in your measure of success or something that you have done that is an accomplishment at the end of every day. Oh, there'll be days you think, "Well, what did I accomplish today? I've just not even gotten through the mail. I didn't get through the dishes. I

didn't get through the, too many." We live in the day of distract-o-mania, but you can find something, some life that you touched, something that you did that made the doing worthwhile.

Dr. James Dobson: I think you've put your finger on really the critical issue having to do with the support team. I've tried to write it and talk about that, because I find many women know they need that but don't know how to go and get it. I was counseling with a young mother just the other day in my office and she said, "I don't have anybody. I don't have any close friends. The one I had turned her back on me." And this is a very bright woman who's a schoolteacher and is very capable, very verbal, very able to get out and meet the world.

Mary Crowley: Oh, I need to recruit her.

Dr. James Dobson: And yet I find many women like that don't know how to take the first step. There is a lack of confidence perhaps-

Mary Crowley: Absolutely. That's it.

Dr. James Dobson: ... to go outside that front door and maybe somebody will hurt me or reject me and it's just easier or seems easier to pull in and let the four walls collapse. I guess you're really addressing that problem.

Mary Crowley: We do. We address that problem a great deal. And you hit it when you said lack of confidence. One time I took a poll all across America from thousands of women, asked them what were their three greatest problems, personality-wise, society-wise, business-wise, or family-wise. And north, south, east and west, there was no names on the papers, it was lack of self-confidence, low esteem. I was just floored. Here's the greatest nation in the Earth, the highest educational level for all women, the greatest opportunities. So I set about, my goal is to help every woman I meet or that hear the sound of my voice to feel better about herself, to realize you are designed for fulfillment.

God has a plan for your life. But I fully believe that they cannot find it till they find that absolute, till they realize that God is their creator, He is their maker. And then they begin to understand what is the character of God. He loves. He cares. He's just. He's fair. He has great things for... And once you find that, you see, people often say to me, "Well, haven't you been discriminated against as a woman?" Well, maybe I just didn't have a sense enough to know it. But you see, if somebody tries to put me down, it diminishes them, not me.

My self-worth is tied up in the character of God Himself. And once any woman finds that out, she's redeemed, she's free to be herself, and then free to have the confidence to say to somebody, "Look, I need some help. I want to get to know some people." And how do you turn people with low self-esteem into good salespeople? Well, first of all, they have to learn what selling really is. They have an idea that selling is going out and talking and convincing people. No, it is

not. True selling is serving a need in that person. And women are very good at understanding that once you find what this person needs and help them fill the need, women are in the habit of filling needs of children, of husbands.

They're nurturers by very nature. And once they realize that it's a natural for them to be able to find the need and to fill it and to help the person in a serving way, they realize that it isn't something big out there that they have to learn, but it's something that they already have a natural ability to do. We just need to develop that ability and help them see what it really is. It's a matter of learning what selling really is.

Most people think of it as something that you talk and that you convince. No, it's finding out person to person what her needs and desires and likes are, what she needs in her life, what she needs in her home. And then I can help you find that. I can help you express your love for your family on the wall or in the figurines or the way that you even arrange a bouquet of flowers. And women are natural nurturers and natural helpers in this area. So once she finds out that she already has the natural ability, we just help her develop it.

Dr. James Dobson: My book, *What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women* is based on this same thing we're talking about here where I asked over 10,000 women to rank order the sources of depression in their lives. And it blew me away too, that the number one source of depression in young, middle-class, seemingly happily married Christian women, was low self-esteem. 50% of the original test group that I based this little study on, put that number one, and 80% put it in the top five.

So this pervasive lack of confidence, lack of self-worth is extremely widespread in our culture. And I think, again, it comes back to television to some degree where every woman feels like she's got to be beautiful, and young, and successful, and the object of somebody's great romantic love and attention in order to feel acceptable and to feel the confidence necessary to cope with life. And unfortunately, that support system just often isn't there.

Mary Crowley: Well, and not everybody is young and slim and gorgeous.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, unfortunately.

Mary Crowley: Well-

Dr. James Dobson: What do you do, Mary, when you're looking eye to eye with a very powerful male corporate executive who has the authority to move great numbers of people and so on? You being a woman, do you look eye to eye with him?

Mary Crowley: Oh, absolutely. Oh, I thoroughly enjoy them. I'm on lots of boards where I'm the only woman. But I don't come in and try to be a pushy female. Let me be sure that I do say that. I am there to make a contribution, not to compete. And with

that complete positive attitude, I never have any difficulty there, because God made us to have special roles and special talents and special abilities, and I can greet and meet and deal with corporate executives or presidents or whatever.

Dr. James Dobson: But that's now. You've got 39,000 people on your staff. What about when you had one? What about when you were beginning? Did you have that kind of confidence? Or did it grow through the years?

Mary Crowley: Well, part of it is growing through the years, but I always had a lot of confidence. Well, the Good Lord born me on April Fool's Day. That was wonderful because most people worry about making a fool of themselves, see and they won't do things that are going to make a fool. I didn't have to worry about that. So-

Dr. James Dobson: You'd already gotten the title right?

Mary Crowley: I already gotten the title, yeah. But part of it comes from the fact that, well, my grandparents taught me to place the Bible as one of our priorities. Not long ago, I gave a speech to young people and I took a TV Guide and a Bible with me. And I held them up. I said, "All of you have these two books in your home. Which one do you refer to the most next week?" Dr. Alan Redpath from England recently spoke. And he said, "In England, we used to base our morality on the Bible. Now we base it on TV." And I thought-

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, what a commentary.

Mary Crowley: ... that's exactly what's happening in America. Really. And so in looking at the Bible, God is who He says He is in His book. I am who He says I am in His book. And since He's who He is, then I'm who He says I am, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Dr. James Dobson: Who does He say you are Mary?

Mary Crowley: He says that I am a child of His. If I believe in Jesus Christ, I'm joint heirs with Him. Wow. What kind of a promise that is? And then, oh, you know many, many places, He says, you talk about giving, over in Thessalonians where He says, "If you will give and share that all grace will be given in all situations and all your needs will be met." Now that is a pretty powerful promise and I've been claiming those for years. Tithing to me is the secret of it, you see. What I can make is not for me to be hoarding. It's a channel. It's a channel. It's kind of like forgiveness. Forgiveness is not given to us in a cup. It's given to us in a pipeline. So what I receive is to be given. And you can't out-give God, He just multiplies it. I'm just amazed at Him.

Dr. James Dobson: What do you say to the people who just feel like they can't tithe, Mary? They just can't pay their bills now and they're \$75-

Mary Crowley: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: ... short every week and just isn't enough to go around and the kids need shoes and there's a hole in the roof and we're trying to put our oldest boy into Christian schools. How in the world am I going to give any money to the Lord's Kingdom?

Mary Crowley: Well, I go back to when I started tithing and it was about 40 years ago. And I was in just that same situation. I had two kids. I was a single parent. I was raising two kids. The war was on. I was working for an insurance company or my income had not risen like other people's had. It was pledge time at the First Baptist Church in Dallas. And I always pledged and gave, but I didn't think I could tithe. So particular night though, the kids were asleep and I was wrestling with that and I was telling the Lord all the reasons I could not tithe.

And I thought of that verse in Proverbs, but is the Lord convinced? He speaks to us through our creative genius mind that He gives us? "Well, Mary, you're not doing such a hot job of it yourself. Why don't you give me a chance?" I said, "Okay, Lord." I checked tithe. "It's your problem. It's your management of my life. I'm going to bed." So then I had to explain to our housekeeper, and the kids, and we had to take it out first because if you don't take it out first and I let-

Dr. James Dobson: It won't be there.

Mary Crowley: And we ate oatmeal quite a bit there in the beginning and some of them would grumble and everything. But something happens. I can't explain it. I don't understand God's mathematics. But within two months time, I was able to get out of debt or behind the eight-ball, wasn't debt per se, but just get caught up. From that day to this, we didn't suddenly have a lot of money, but something did happen. And I can guarantee that if you give God's management of your money, He has management of your life. Things change.

Dr. James Dobson: It really is true.

Mary Crowley: I cannot explain it.

Dr. James Dobson: It really is true.

Mary Crowley: I challenge people. I teach classes. I told you of people, 150 people, single by death or divorced, and a lot of them have aging parents and a lot of problems. I challenge them every year. I say, "Okay, you tithe for six months and at the end of six months, if you're not better off than you are now, I'll pick up the tab for the difference." And I never-

Dr. James Dobson: You just said that to 3 million people. Are you-

Mary Crowley: That's all. That's right. And I have never yet had anybody take me up on it.

Dr. James Dobson: Jesus spoke more about money than any other subject. So it must be extremely important to our spiritual welfare, as well as to our financial welfare.

Mary Crowley: Well, it's exciting.

Dr. James Dobson: Mary, we have a great deal of love for you, as I've said, for the kind of person you are, what you represent, not what you give, but who you are. You love the Lord and it shows in everything that you do. And it's been a pleasure meeting your staff, some of your people came with you today.

Mary Crowley: Aren't they wonderful? Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: They're sitting in the gallery over there watching us broadcast today. And I just hope that you'll come back, continue doing the great work that you're doing. And I just trust the Lord will be very close to you in this coming year.

Mary Crowley: Thank you. It's been a joy to be here. And I guess I would like to say to every person out there, trust Him. Try Him. Prove Him. He will never let you down.

Dr. James Dobson: You really mean that?

Mary Crowley: I really mean that.

Dr. James Dobson: Have you found that true of your entire lifetime?

Mary Crowley: Absolutely. Absolutely. See, I've learned that Christianity is not a way of doing certain things. It's a certain way of doing all things. And I can absolutely say without any doubt at all, if you really trust Him, He has a better plan for your life than you can have for yourself. And I am amazed at what He's done with one little orphan gal.

Dr. James Dobson: Bless you, Mary. Our prayers and our thoughts will be with you.

Mary Crowley: Thank you.

Roger Marsh: Christianity is not a way of doing certain things, it's a certain way of doing all things. What a great thought to wrap up today's classic program featuring the late Mary Crowley here on Family Talk. Now you've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and a timeless conversation between Dr. Dobson and his guest Mary Crowley, about finding purpose, building confidence, and trusting God's plan for your life. Mary's remarkable journey from a single mother to building a multi-million dollar business all while putting God first continues to inspire women even today.

By the way, if you missed any part of this classic program or if you'd like to share it with someone who really needs a word of encouragement today, visit drjamesdobson.org or you can find the program easily on the Family Talk app.

Here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we are committed to helping you and your family grow closer to God and each other. But these daily broadcasts and resources are only made possible through the generous support of friends like you who share our vision for strong faith-filled families. Your tax-deductible donation today will help us continue broadcasting messages of hope and practical wisdom to millions of listeners in America and all over the world.

To make a secure donation online, go to drjamesdobson.org. Or if you'd prefer, you can send your donation through the mail Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code 80949. And for more daily inspiration and biblical guidance, I encourage you to explore our reading plans in the Bible app by YouVersion. You can choose from 48 different plans, 24 on marriage, and 24 on parenting. Each one contains three lessons to encourage growth in your relationships. These brief devotionals are perfect for busy parents or couples who want to grow together in their faith. Just open the Bible app on your phone or mobile device, search for Dr. James Dobson and start your first reading plan today.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh and from all of us here at Family Talk, we are so grateful that you've joined us for today's classic program. Be sure to join us again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.