



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Making Marriage Easier – Part 1

Guest(s): Arlene Pellicane

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

Roger Marsh: Well, hello and welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh jumping into the co-host's seat today. You know, in Genesis chapter 2, verse 18, we read these words, "The Lord God said it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." And then further on down a couple of verses later, Genesis chapter 2, verse 24, we read, "This is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife and they become one flesh." We know that marriage is foundational to the Lord and represents His love for us and the church and the body of Christ. But if you look around at our culture today, the idea of marriage is being attacked, literally from all sides. It's being seen as a throwaway or something that really shouldn't be taken too seriously. Well, at the first sign of trouble within marriages today, it seems like a lot of people are encouraged just to throw it away, abandon the relationship altogether, because you want to pursue what "makes you happy."

Well, if you're married, you know that marriage can be hard. But what if there was a way to make marriage easier for you to love and even like your spouse? That's a great way of looking at it. And our guest today here on Family Talk is Arlene Pellicane, and she has released a brand-new book that features that title, *Making Marriage Easier: How to Love (and Like) Your Spouse for Life*. Arlene Pellicane is an author, she's a speaker, she's the host of the Happy Home podcast, and in addition, she serves as the spokesperson for National Marriage Week. Arlene and her husband, James, have been married over 25 years. They have three children and lots of great stories to tell, but James isn't here to defend himself, but Arlene is. So Arlene Pellicane, welcome to Family Talk. We're delighted to have you here on the program and Dr. and Mrs. Dobson send their warmest regards as well.

Arlene Pellicane: It's an honor to be here. And yes, my husband is very funny, and if it wasn't for him, there would be no book. There are no funny stories because I didn't have to do anything strange.

Roger Marsh: Well, you know, he has to be a good sport because obviously you guys have a dynamic marriage and you're such a great communicator about this. I think that vulnerability that you share, whether you're talking about teens and screens or just being parents. And now tackling marriage, I appreciate the fact that 25 years into it, you're saying, okay, we want to kind of air this out a little bit because marriage doesn't have to be as difficult as it is. And yet just because something is simple doesn't mean it's easy.

Arlene Pellicane: Yeah, we have this mindset, right? Oh, it's so hard. It's so much work. And then you think like, wait a minute, how could we turn this around and just ask the question, wait, "how could I make my marriage easier today?" So in the same way, if you wanted to get healthier, right? You think, oh, I want to be healthy, I want to be healthy. Well, how would you make that easier? Well, I'd actually buy healthy food. I'd actually ask a friend to join me for a walk and have an actual appointment. There are things you can do to make that easier. And the same is true in marriage.

Roger Marsh: You know, it's interesting. I think you and I had conversation in another lifetime for me when you had become the spokesperson for the National Marriage Week. Talk about that. I mean, we've passed it for this year, but for people who want to plan ahead, it happens the same time every year. What exactly is National Marriage Week and what's your involvement in that?

Arlene Pellicane: Yeah, so National Marriage Week happens every year between February 7th and 14th. And you know how like there could be National Ice Cream Day and it's like, let's go get some ice cream because we all love it and stand in line for ice cream. Well, National Marriage Week is like, let's build some excitement around marriage to say that marriage is good for us as people, it's good for a society, it's good for communities and celebrate marriage. And there are resources like this past year we had live streams that you could have for absolutely free to learn about communication, intimacy, how to have fun again, all those things. So it is there to A, put marriage in front of people once again to say this is worth defending, cherishing, enjoying, giving hope to the next generation for. And then we are equipping current marriages. How can we help you? And you can go anytime during the year to marriageweek.org and find resources on how to talk again. You're just staring at each other at dinner. You don't know what to say. There are conversation starters. There are a calendar of events that you can see if there's a marriage event in your area. So all of that is there all year long at marriageweek.org.

Roger Marsh: Well, we'll link that up at drjamesdobson.org as well because that's a resource that I know our listeners will definitely appreciate. And you mentioned ice cream and National Marriage Week. I know there's a marriage ice cream story in your future. We're going to talk about that in just a moment. But first, we want to get into this brand new book, *Making Marriage Easier*. You know, I love your writing. I know Tori Brown, our producer, was reading yours and saying, "Oh my gosh, this book is hilarious. it's so much fun." I love the topics that you've talked

about. Where did this desire, this passion, if you will, come from for you that says, "I want to write these things down and share them with people?"

Arlene Pellicane: Yeah, I was the girl who dreamt of getting married, right? And then it's like, you go through college, you go through working, and it's like, "Where is this man?" So then finally, when I married him in my late 20s, which at that time seemed like a really long time to wait for someone, which today is probably much more informative in the culture. But when I got married, it was like, "this is fantastic." And as the years went on, it was still kind of fantastic. And then when I had kids, we struggled with having children. We had infertility, I miscarried, all these different things. And so when I had a child, it was like, this is amazing. And we have really found that if you raise your kids with discipline and love and all the things that Dr. Dobson would talk about, they grow up to be people you really like and you really enjoy. So I thought to myself, we are not so unusual to enjoy marriage, to enjoy parenting, but it seems like that's not happening for a lot of people. So that's the inspiration for like, let me write about this, let me talk about this, let me podcast about this, speak about this to encourage people that your home can be happy, even if you didn't come from a happy home, you can create one because the joy of the Lord is our strength.

Roger Marsh: I love that. And this title, *Making Marriage Easier*, that's not tongue and cheek, you really do mean that there is a way to make this simpler.

Arlene Pellicane: Let's make this a little bit easier.

Roger Marsh: Sure. *And How to Love (and Like) Your Spouse for Life* and and like is in their parenthetically. Let's talk about some of the ways that it is, well, first of all, I mean, is it really possible? There's someone hearing us right now who says, "Arlene, you have no idea what my marriage is like." Yeah, and quite frankly, I think Stephen Curtis Chapman had the best line when he was talking about his wife, Mary Beth and he said, "You know, I just want to thank her for signing up for a job where if she'd actually read the job description, she never would have applied." You know, that'd be my wife, but that's where we all are when we get into marriage, right? We think we know.

Arlene Pellicane: And people need to know that, that, "Oh, Arlene is talking about this and she's so happy all the time." No, we are normal people and there are many times...my husband James and I we're very different people. I'm a rules follower. He is a free spirit. And so when I think to myself, "Well, I don't like you very much. You're making me do this thing that I don't want to do or you're doing this thing and I disagree with you," something that has really helped me is realizing, "Well, he probably doesn't like me very much either in this moment." So the thing that you are so frustrated with about your spouse, if you will take a moment to think, you know, from their point of view, they're probably like, that person is also, you know, to realize we are equally frustrating to one another. And just that thought pattern helps you to be more compassionate towards your spouse and to realize, you know what, I need to act in a likable way, not just before marriage, but throughout marriage, so that you actually like me and it will spur

your spouse to say too, "Oh yeah, I have this great spouse. Why am I acting like such a jerk? I should be more likable too." So it is this attitude that it's not just that you were attractive to one another before you said, "I do," but you're working through the years, through the seasons of marriage, seasons through life to remain likable to one another.

Roger Marsh:

Well, one of the quotes I have from your book, *Making Marriage Easier*, is when that happens, when husband and wife welcome a baby. And all of a sudden, and there's a nice little pull quote here where you say "it's natural for the new title of parent to eclipse the longer held titles of husband and wife, but that total eclipse needs to end as the baby gets older." Now that doesn't mean you're rejecting your kids, but it means that oftentimes we can become too child focused and the kids don't really need us to be as child focused as they did when they were younger.

Arlene Pellicane:

Yeah, just think of all the things that we will do for our children from driving them around to, you know, being at practice. I'll sit in a car for an hour and wait for my girls to get out of tennis practice and I'll bring a book and it will be no problem. But if my husband said, "hey can you bring me somewhere and wait for me for an hour, I would be like, "Do you not know about Uber or Lyft, brother? Like why would I do that?" So it's like that consideration that we have for our kids that we would so easily do for our children so easily patient with them as they are working through a problem but if our spouse has a problem, we're like, "are you not over that yet? I need a fully functioning adult here by my side." So it is this idea that prioritize that marriage, still date your spouse, still spend time with them, you know, and this is practical stuff. This doesn't mean you have to spend hours and hours with your spouse every day, but it's a hug at the door. It's a glance that is two seconds long that kind of just lets the other person know I still see you. I still know you. It's the willingness to listen. You know, at the end of the day, it's me rubbing my husband's feet because he likes that. He's a physical touch kind of guy. And I'm a words kind of person, so I like to talk. So we both kind of get that done and it's nice. So it's those little moments of connection throughout the day where the marriage isn't in the trunk, you know, like buried under all this stuff to be resurrected in the empty nest years, you know, but that throughout the marriage that you're still carrying, you know, and that's one of the rules of our marriage is that the marriage is that priority relationship because when it's all said and done, you look at that five-year -old, seven-year-old, you think someday you will be my extended family, and it seems preposterous in that moment. But, you know, I've got two college kids now and a high schooler, and it's really real that you see like, wow, you are going to grow up to have your own life and your own family, perhaps, and it's dad and me, it's my husband and me, and we better take care of that relationship.

Roger Marsh:

It is very gratifying when you see your kids because all of my biological children are over 30, and Lisa and I have a blended family, and we have a couple who are in their late 20s but for the most part, we say, "You're old. You're grown." We don't have to be that priority for them because they're making their own

decisions. They're benefiting from unfortunately some of the mistakes they saw their parents made and now they're in their 30s and raising young children and hopefully making good decisions. It's great to have this conversation today with Arlene Pellicane. She's the author of the brand new book called *Making Marriage Easier How to Love (and Like) Your Spouse for Life*, and you'll find a link up at drjamesdobson.org. Arlene, you split the book up into four different sections. You've got four different, as you say, decisions that couples have to make to make marriages easier. Walk us through each of these if you would, just kind of let's do a 35,000 foot flyover and then we'll dive into them a little more.

Arlene Pellicane: Decision one is play by the rules. And this is the idea, like if you're playing a game and if the boundaries change or the rules change, like what is happening? It's the same thing in marriage. There are rules. We look at God's Word for these rules. How do we honor one another, love one another, respect one another? And we do these rules, you know a big rule that you've made this vow, how do we keep this vow? You know, it's one of the things we've done to play by the rules is the power hour which is a daily meal together as long as we're both in the same city, you know, we're traveling, et cetera, that we're having meals together. So it's just a rule of life that it's a pattern. So what are like the patterns in your life and the rules that keep your marriage healthy and strong? So play by those rules.

The second decision is give thanks every day. When you found your spouse, you were thankful. You're like, thank you God that I have finally found this person. And a couple of years into it, you might be like, oh Lord, what is it? And instead of the thanks, we have the grumbling, right? "Oh, he doesn't do this. She doesn't do this anymore. Why are they all on my case? They don't consider me." Turn that into Thanksgiving once again. "Lord, I thank you for my spouse." That third decision is serve your spouse. That's real popular, right? 'Cause we live in a culture where it's like, don't serve anyone, you know, stick up for yourself.

Roger Marsh: Be your own boss.

Arlene Pellicane: Defend your own rights, be your own boss, find your own happiness. But the Bible clearly tells us, I mean, Jesus is a servant. You think of the big guys in the Old Testament, Moses, Daniel, David, they are servants of God, like the higher you go in God's eyes, the more servant like you are. And so marriage is such a beautiful place to say, "What can I do for you?" Instead of thinking all the time, "Well, what have you done for me today? You don't do very much for me. Why would I do anything for you because you don't do anything for me?" Right? Turning this around, how can we serve our spouses? And again, this is not a permission for abuse.

This is not a permission to be neglected. That's not what we're talking about. This is simply like, "how can I help you today?" Have that kind of attitude? Instead of, "hmm, hmm, hmm, when are you gonna do something for me?" You know, not to have that attitude. And then the last decision is a fun one. It is take

fun seriously. That fun sometimes seems like an extra, like we'll do that once a year during our week-long vacation or we'll do that when we have more money or we'll do that when the kids are grown. But no, you can't do that because if you think to yourself, when was the last time we had fun together? Like when was the last time we laughed together? And you really have to think hard about that question. It shows you like, wow, this relationship is not very fun. It's more business. like roommate like, it's transactional. It's not really connecting. So having fun and using your time for it, saving your money for it is actually a really wise and I believe godly thing to do. So take fun seriously. Be playful again with each other.

Roger Marsh: I love that. And as you think of all of these working together, I know you write about in the book some examples that you have of where you and James kind of didn't necessarily see. You actually have a common experience with my daughter, Emily, and her husband, Brian. Brian has a degree in environmental science. He's Mr. Nature. Isaac, their oldest son, was barefoot for the first three years of their life. They loved to be outdoors, hunt fish, all that other stuff. And Emily's idea of roughing at the outdoors was glamping, right? Getting up before nine on Saturday morning was her... And all of a sudden, now she loves to go camp, she loves to hike, she loves all that stuff. And I asked her one day, I said, "Em, do you like this because she just loved Brian so much? She goes, no dad, found out, guess what? I really do like it." But I know you and James have kind of a similar story. You know, he's one way and you're the other. You're kind of like, okay, who's gonna, as long as you didn't try to win the argument, if you will, it's kind of turned out to be a fun experience for you. Talk about that.

Arlene Pellicane: It has been, you know, I should have known when on our wedding registry, he put like a tent and all this stuff that I would have never put on a wedding registry. It's like all the love is blind kind of things and we were newlyweds and it was a new church we were attending and he said "Let's go to the camping trip, young marrieds' camping trip." "Okay that sounds good." But you know how you say yeah that sounds good but in your heart you're like I don't want to do that. So the whole car ride and you're exactly right, he grew up camping, I didn't. The whole car ride, I'm mad, I'm selling, "Are you too hot? Too cold?" "I'm fine." "Do you want to listen to the radio?" "Oh I don't care."

Roger Marsh: The worst thing a husband can hear from his wife is I'm fine.

Arlene Pellicane: I'm fine. I don't care. You choose. So we get to the campsite like an hour away. He stops the car. He says, "Are you going to be like this all weekend? Because if you are, we don't have to be here because I'm here to have fun." And I will start crying like a newlywed, you know, like, "I mean, I didn't have to come?" You know, and then I realized I'm being selfish, like "I'm sorry, my attitude is awful." And isn't it funny, you can be so sad and mad at your spouse, but then with other people, you walk out of the car, oh, hi, I love camping. Nice tent, you can be so nice to other people. But I would say that experience was like a B-minus for me, so it wasn't like I loved it, but it was okay.

But through the years, the idea has been, if you like it, I'll try it. And I will say, we've gotten more advanced, so we've got to the point where we are two nights, you know, back country, 30 pounds on your back and you're doing it, you're going to the bathroom in the wild, you're sleeping out there, the whole deal. And I will say, Roger, there are moments where it's so beautiful that I'm like, this is so worth it, I will do this. But then there are other moments, which I said on a Yosemite trip, we've done this twice so far, that I told my husband, I would pay \$5,000 if someone would airlift me from this spot back to my car, I would seriously give. I will work really hard and give you that \$5,000 if someone would get me out of here. So I have this love-hate relationship, but you know what's funny is that when it's easy, I love it, and when it's super hard, right? It's uphill for a really long time, it's treacherous, then I'm like, man, I'm out. And this is marriage that you don't know what it's gonna be like, but you have to make the whole loop. There's no one to rescue you midway through and you work it out together, you take it slow, you might have to camp out, all those things, but I thought it was such a good analogy that you have to finish what you started. It's not always the same way, but like your daughter says, it's beautiful, and really you do when you start seeing things from your spouse's point of view, you see why there really is beauty in that whatever that thing is that they really enjoy that you don't quite, but you're willing to do it. And that's the whole serve your spouse, like I'm willing to do that, and you do it for each other.

Roger Marsh: You know, it's wonderful to hear these stories from someone who's, these are tried and true principles from Arlene Pelican. The book is called *Making Marriage Easier, How to Love (and Like) Your Spouse for Life*. And we highly recommend this book here at the Dr. James Stops and Family Institute. You know, it's interesting, Arlene, when I first got to know you, you were talking about teens and screens and things like that and the social media influence. My parents are celebrating their 70th wedding anniversary this August.

Arlene Pellicane: That's amazing, Roger.

Roger Marsh: And it's wonderful. They met in high school, first day of senior year, my dad was in the same homeroom class as my mom, she was taking role and he just fell pet over heels in love with her to the point where she had a boyfriend, he had a girlfriend and they arranged a double date so they could spend some time together then they wound up getting rid of the other two. My dad's kind of clever like that.

Arlene Pellicane: That's awesome.

Roger Marsh: But I think about the 70 years for them, and it was never a question. I mean, my dad's madly in love with my mom, and my mom is perfectly happy to let him madly love her, and she respects the heck out of it. I mean, they have a wonderful marriage. But they didn't grow up in a Facebook world. They didn't grow up in TikTok land. They didn't have all these other people saying, "Well, I have the perfect spouse," this, that and the other thing.

And that's a real thing now, isn't it? The couples are dealing with when you want to try to love your spouse, you want to try to like your spouse, but when you have this comparison thing going on all the time, it really does skew the way we view marriage, doesn't it?

Arlene Pellicane: And really to understand, we used to understand, okay, if I'm watching this television show, if I'm looking at this magazine, they staged all this. We kind of understood their house doesn't normally look like that. They don't normally act like that towards each other. They're just on camera right now and they're really giving it to us for the camera. And then we go on social media and we think, "Oh, this is a snapshot of people's normal lives." And then to realize, "No, it's not. This is them showing you the best vacation and the best..." And the thing is, you're not following them all the time of all the other stuff that's not being posted. So you're only seeing the best of someone's life. And not only that, but you're not just looking at, let's say your community, you're looking at the world like you have access on your phone to everyone in the entire world. So it really is a silly and unfair comparison that it is not realistic.

It's also that environment, think of your parents are growing up in an environment where marriage is celebrated, where it's understood like you stick together through hard times and the community really supports that. Well, when people go online now, the community supports, "Oh, you're not happy. Well, you should get out. You know, there's a better way." So to realize that, wait a minute, the community isn't that vibrant, loving, helpful, right, devoted community as well. And so we need to find that offline, people in your life who will support you in your marriage and to realize when you go online, that is not real. And when you're at dinner, when you're on vacation, you're there for each other, you're not there to produce social media content, right? So to realize, okay, wait a minute, let me get this straight to be fully present with the real people in my life and not to compare myself and to ask myself, is my phone use helping me fear God more or is it helping me fear man more? Like, what do they say? What do they say about my marriage and just see it through that lens? And a lot of it may be, you know, really putting new environmental things in place where you don't take your phone on a dinner date, where you don't look at your phone first thing in the morning or last thing at night so you can look at your spouse instead.

Roger Marsh: Well, that's helpful because that's one of the questions you ask in the book. You pose the question, is your phone more interesting than your spouse?

Arlene Pellicane: Yeah.

Roger Marsh: And I know for a lot of people it is. I mean, there's this, I gotta find some new attractive distraction.

Arlene Pellicane: Yeah, it's hyper, it's just completely charged with everything you're interested in and it changes all the time. So how in the world can your spouse compete, you know, with all of that? So to realize, wait a minute, I need to put this down and

be curious about my spouse once again and find them interesting again. And that's something you really have to do on purpose.

Roger Marsh:

Yeah, it's wonderful when you can reach that point in marriage where you realize, hey, every day there is something that I can be thankful for because I learned something new. Sometimes you learned something new and it's not that great, but at least you learned it and it deepens the relationship. And the only way you can really measure the success, I think of a marriage, not so much, "Hey, we can spend a lot of money on each other and take wild trips and buy big houses and fancy cars." It's what happens when you're going through the tough times.

Well, we are just scratching the surface here on this great new book from Arlene Pelican, *Making Marriage Easier, How to Love (and Like) Your Spouse for Life*. We have a link for it up at drjamesdobson.org. Arlene, can you come back next time and we can continue this conversation?

Arlene Pellicane:

I would love to. Thanks so much.

Roger Marsh:

You know there's something refreshing about hearing someone say, "let's make marriage easier," instead of dwelling on how hard it is. On today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, our guest has been Arlene Pellicane, and she's written a brand-new book on this subject called *Making Marriage Easier*. Now if you found today's conversation to be encouraging, you can listen to it again or share it with someone you love by visiting drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And while you're there, be sure you check out information about Arlene's book as well. Once again, the title is *Making Marriage Easier*. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

You know, strengthening marriages is central to so much of what we do here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Our mission is to help preserve and promote the institution of the family, and the biblical principles on which it's based. When marriages thrive, families flourish. And when families flourish, our entire culture is strengthened. Right now, you have an extraordinary opportunity to multiply your impact in supporting this mission of strengthening families and helping them to flourish. All throughout the month of June, thanks to several generous ministry partners who have come together to offer a special matching grant. This means that every dollar you donate to Family Talk will be matched dollar for dollar, effectively doubling your support for families all across the country. A \$500 gift becomes \$1000. A \$2500 gift becomes \$5000. Even \$100 gift becomes \$200. Now some might be able to give more, some less but every donation regardless of size will go twice as far in bringing hope and practical biblical wisdom to marriages and families who need it the most.

Now you can have your gift doubled through the special June matching grant when you go to drjamesdobson.org, or by giving us a call at 877-732-6825. And when you contact us, be sure to ask for Dr. Dobson's powerful book called *Your Legacy* along with the companion DVD. You know, in these challenging times,

this book and DVD combination will equip you to pass down an unshakable heritage of faith to your children and your grandchildren. Now the book includes Dr. Dobson's personal story, also strategies for spiritual training and practical steps for leading your children and grandchildren to Christ. Now we'll be happy to send you a copy of Dr. Dobson's book, *Your Legacy*, along with the companion DVD as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in the month of June to the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. So make a secure donation online at drjamesdobson.org, give us a call at 877-732-6825. Or you can send your tax-deductible donation through the U.S. Postal Service. Our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, P.O. Box 39000 Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code, 80949. Remember this matching opportunity ends on Monday, June 30, so please don't wait. Your partnership makes it possible for us to continue bringing biblical truth and encouragement to families just like yours through the radio and through our online ministries as well.

I'm Roger Marsh thanking you so much for joining us today. On behalf of Dr. Dobson and all of the staff, thanks for being part of Family Talk. Be sure to join us again next time for part two of this encouraging conversation with author Arlene Pellicane talking about making marriage easier. That'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.

Announcer:

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