



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Fifty Years of Shepherding God's People with Love and Power – Part 1

**Guest(s):** Dona Fisher

**Air Date:** April 30, 2025

- Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson, and I'm pleased that you've chosen to join us today for what I believe is going to be a very interesting radio program. It will feature a guest named Dona Fisher, whom we have known and loved for many years, and her husband is also here, although she's going to do most of the talking. We are going to be talking about a book that she has written, she just finished it a short time ago. The title of it is *Change of Pace*, and the subtitle is *50 Years of Shepherding God's Sheep with Love and Power*. And there's so much we have to talk about. Dona, let's get going, shall we?
- Dona Fisher: Oh, it's a privilege to be here. Dr. Dobson, I've known you for so many years, and never, ever-
- Dr. James Dobson: Then, why don't you call me Jim?
- Dona Fisher: Okay, I would love to call you Jim. I never thought I'd sit on the other side of the table and have you interview me, I feel so honored. Thank you.
- Dr. James Dobson: Well, that's what you get for writing such an interesting book, and-
- Dona Fisher: Well, for you to say it's interesting, you excite me.
- Dr. James Dobson: This is a book on your life, it's autobiographical.
- Dona Fisher: It is, it is.
- Dr. James Dobson: And you're talking about experiences from your childhood on.
- Dona Fisher: Yes.
- Dr. James Dobson: And it's not going to be easy for you, because it's never easy to talk about yourself on a time like this and with these circumstances. So enjoy what you're doing, and I'm going to ask you to read from your own book for a while, because it is right out of your book. And Dona, I want to tell you, this is a good book, and it is-
- Dona Fisher: Thank you.
- Dr. James Dobson: ... wonderful to see what you have done.

Dona Fisher: And it took me two years to put it together, because there were a lot of tears.

Dr. James Dobson: There's a lot of pain in your childhood, isn't there?

Dona Fisher: Yes, yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I'm going to ask you to read from page 14.

Dona Fisher: Okay.

Dr. James Dobson: And it took a lot of courage for you to come here and talk about that-

Dona Fisher: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: ... because this was not an easy assignment for you.

Dona Fisher: "I felt like my mother didn't love me. At least, that's what my child heart said. I was born a farmer's daughter. I came along four years after my brother, and then my sister four years after that. My family worked from sun up to sundown. From early childhood, I suffered from extreme pain in my back, and the hard work of farm tasks exasperated it. I just couldn't do the hard work. So my family called me-"

Dr. James Dobson: They thought you were lazy, didn't they?

Dona Fisher: They thought I was lazy, and stubborn, and just not willing to go along with family details. "So what happened was every morning, I woke up, I was in such pain, and my mother would punish me. She would give me whoopings for not completing my chores."

Dr. James Dobson: Is that what she called them or is that what you called them?

Dona Fisher: I called them whoopings, they were worse than that. I just can't say how bad they were. They were whoopings, whatever was nearby was used. "Sometimes, she sent me to bed with no supper. As my tears fell, mother would say, 'Crying again? I'll give you something to cry about,' and then they were worse. I couldn't put all my blame on her. Physical pain made me a miserable child. Only when I was in my teens did my family learn that I was born with a very deep curvature of my spine. I was diagnosed with spondylolisthesis and scoliosis. Pain followed me everywhere. I quickly learned to keep my suffering to myself and avoid their criticism. So I enjoyed no camaraderie, inner peace, or sense of fulfillment, or any love. Pain and tears were my constant companions, so pain and I became close friends."

Dr. James Dobson: Dona, when you say you did not experience any love, is that really the truth? I mean, was it that bad?

Dona Fisher: Jim, I never had a hug till I was 30 years old. And my story will get to that point where I tell you I had my first hug from my mother. Never did I remember having a hug. As a matter of fact, my little baby sister was born, and she cried a lot and had some allergies. And my mother would hold her a lot, and sometimes she'd put me in a little rocking chair and put her... I was four years old, put my little sister in my arms, and I could rock her to keep her from crying. But I said to my mother one day, "Why don't you hold me some time?" She said, "You're too big to be held." I was four years old. I really was saying, "Mother, just hug me or do something. Tell me you love me, instead of just beating me," but she didn't get it.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, that puts a lump in my throat, and I imagine yours too, even after all these years.

Dona Fisher: It does, it does.

Dr. James Dobson: You're still crying about it, isn't that amazing?

Dona Fisher: I am, I am. I am forgiven, though, and I can't wait to get to that good part of my book. But I did, I suffered, and pain and I became good friends.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, your sister didn't like you very much, either, did she?

Dona Fisher: Well, she didn't like anybody. My sister was born on the very same day that my grandfather died. This was so emotional for my mother. She could barely stand both of these emotions in the same hospital. As a matter of fact, the hospital personnel realized how emotional she was, and they didn't let her know about her father's death the same day her daughter was born. She picked it up several days in the newspaper and saw that her father had died. This took my mother into a tailspin. I was the end result of her emotions.

Dr. James Dobson: Dona, I've been reading your book, and I meant it when I said this is a very captivating book, and I feel for you as I read what you have written. Dona, you were also told you were going to Hell.

Dona Fisher: Oh, yes. Well, that was my brother. He loved to tease me. He'd tell me stuff and I'd be stupid enough to believe him most of the time, because he communicated with me, and we laughed sometimes. But the bishop came to visit our house. When the bishop of the church came, we all took notice and sat up tall. He told my brother that if he doesn't invite Jesus into his heart, he will go to Hell.

Dr. James Dobson: And then, your brother passed that on to you?

Dona Fisher: Uh-huh. He said, "Dona is not.... You're just not going to go to Heaven, you're going to go to Hell if you don't invite Jesus into your heart." "Well, who is Jesus? And how was I going to know how to invite Him into my heart? I'm a little girl with a little heart. How can Jesus live in my heart?" I didn't get that at all. So one

day, I kept thinking about it in my brain, and one day I came home from school, I always had about two miles to walk from school. And if my brother wasn't with me, I was all by myself on a two-mile walk to my house. And I came home, and I noticed it was so quiet in our farmhouse. I didn't hear my sister, I didn't see my mother, I didn't see my dad, I didn't see my brother.

And so I went out into the garden, and I looked up into the clouds, and I said, "God, if you're up there, am I so bad that you can't take me to Heaven with my family?" Oh, you don't know how happy I was when I heard that black old Buick come up the driveway, and my mother was late from an appointment. Oh, Jesus didn't take my family home after all without me. That was a happy day. But it never left me, it never left me about Jesus in my heart. So one night, my parents took me to a tent revival meeting. I was sort of excited about this, because I knew it would be something about God, Jesus, spiritual. And the pastor in the end said, "If you want to invite Jesus into your heart, come forward, come up." I said, "Mom, can I go? Can I go up?" And she goes-

Dr. James Dobson: And how old were you there?

Dona Fisher: I was eight years old. She goes, "You're too young to understand that," and pushed me down in my seat. And soon after we left, I went to bed that night and I talked to the darkness. I said, "How old must I be to ask Jesus into my heart?" I didn't get an answer, and life was the same.

Dr. James Dobson: Was your father that cruel to you, too?

Dona Fisher: My father was quiet, but if my mother was on a real rampage, she would stir him up.

Dr. James Dobson: So he must've been-

Dona Fisher: Quiet.

Dr. James Dobson: ... afraid of your mother, too?

Dona Fisher: I think he was. He was very quiet. It was just a very uncomfortable childhood.

Dr. James Dobson: I would like to fast-forward here, because it didn't stay that way. You made peace with your mother eventually.

Dona Fisher: Oh, let me tell you what happened. A lot in between there. I'll jump from 8 years old to 16. In between, there was nothing but hard farm work and lots of whoopings. That was my daily routine of life. But I asked my dad, "Can I date? How old must I be until I can go out with boys?" And he said, "16 years old. When you become 16, you can go dating." So I had a lot of church friends. We did go to a church, and I loved the young people there. And one young man,

when I was 16 years old, on my birthday, was standing at my front door, and he wanted to have a date. So I said, "Yes, I can go out now."

And then, all of a sudden, I'm thinking, "Well, what does that mean? I don't know how to emotionally even... I can talk with my girlfriends, but what do I do with a man? I don't know." So anyway, he was a cute little farmer's boy, and we had fun together, talking. And after three weeks of dating me, he said, "Can I marry you?" I went, "I'm only 16, I'm a kid." He goes, "If I don't marry you, somebody else will. I want to marry you. You must promise me." I went, "I can't promise that. I really, I really can't. I think we should not be going together anymore, because you somehow have feelings for me that I don't have for you," so I said goodbye. Jim, I dated 25 men in one year.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Dona Fisher: I was sick of them.

Dr. James Dobson: And that's hard to get a hold of, because-

Dona Fisher: I know.

Dr. James Dobson: ... you felt nobody loved you; nobody liked you-

Dona Fisher: I know.

Dr. James Dobson: ... and that everybody thought you were lazy and everybody had all kinds of misgivings about you, and yet, you've got all these boys hammering on the door. How does that work?

Dona Fisher: Well, let me tell you, I didn't let him touch me. I didn't know love, I didn't know how to be responsive. So I was just shy, tried to be funny, tried to go play golf with him, miniature golf, and restaurant...

Dr. James Dobson: Did your mother discourage you from being with boys?

Dona Fisher: No, I think mother would have been okay with me dating boys. Why did I have so many? You know, I've been asked that even by my girlfriends. "What did the guys see in you?" I loved to make different outfits and put colors together. And that was a good time for me to look nice. I wanted to look good. It must've been how I looked, I don't know. But after 25, and I wrote them all in my diary, every one of those men, after 25, I said, "I'm done with this. This is not making me happy. I don't want to be with a man. I don't know what that means."

So I said, "God, if you're up there, I want you to close my heart, and open it when you know it's the right one. Other than that, I'm not going to date. But now, God, I love Cinderella. I love how she was abused as a child, but you brought Prince Charming to her and made her happy. So God, if you're up there,

would you bring me Prince Charming and take me into a land of happiness forever?" That was my prayers at night, it brought me joy. While my mother was whooping me, often I'd think about Cinderella. "She got out of this mess, and maybe I will, too." "Oh, God, P.S. I don't want it to be a farmer."

Dr. James Dobson: Because they have to work too hard?

Dona Fisher: They have to work too hard. And you know what? I so appreciate farmers today. What would we do without them? I appreciate that God put me on a farm.

Dr. James Dobson: But at the time, you didn't like it?

Dona Fisher: I didn't like farm work; it was so heavy. Oh, the heavy lifting. And it was very hard for my back, I hurt.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, I can see today that you're a beautiful woman, and you had to be a beautiful child. Boys do not chase after girls that aren't pretty.

Dona Fisher: I don't know, Jim.

Dr. James Dobson: You didn't draw any success from anything, did you?

Dona Fisher: No, no, I really didn't. There was just something I would find negative. My life was negative, and I would find negative in these men. They were probably all wonderful men, but I just wasn't liking them. It just didn't appeal to me.

Dr. James Dobson: But Herb came along.

Dona Fisher: Well, hey, guess what? When I was in the state of mind where I'm not dating, I turned down a lot of men, and my girlfriend said, "Hey, let's go to church Sunday night and let's dress alike." I went, "Yeah, let's. Let's mess up the men, see if they get us confused." So we put our hair exactly the same, and wore the same dress, and we went to Sunday night church. And this was a campground, kind of a church where the chapel was opened. And when my friend and I came out after the service, I looked ahead, I said, "Who in the world is that man? He's the most handsome man I ever laid my eyes on." And she goes, "Oh, that man, he dated a girl for a while in another county, so that's why you wouldn't know him." So that was all we said.

So it was sort of getting dark, and the trees were having shadows, and I saw him come over toward us, and I went, "Oh, I'm not dating, I'm not dating, so I'm not going to... I hope you don't come to me." And he didn't, he came to my friend, and my friend said, "Herb, you know who I am. You wanted Dona." "Oh," he said, "I did." And he turned and walked away, because he sort of made a mistake, and I think he was a little embarrassed.

Anyway, the next day I got a phone call. "This is Herb Fisher, could I take you out on a date?" I went, "I'm sorry, I'm not dating right now." He said, "What?" I said, "I just am on a time where I'm not dating any men." So he said, "Okay." The next day, his cousin called and said, "You turned Herb Fisher down." She said, "I think any woman who he'd ask, they would be glad to go out with him. He's a wonderful man." I said, "I don't know him, so I don't date strangers." Then, she said, "Well, could you at least talk to him?" I said, "Well, we have county fairs in our area," and it was the New Holland Fair that week. I said, "If he comes there, I'll look for him and we can talk."

Dr. James Dobson: And that was the first date?

Dona Fisher: Yeah, wasn't a date. I just said, "If he's there, I'll talk." I didn't say I was going out with him. So anyway, I was amazed. My heart was still closed, I'm not dating, but I found myself looking all over that fair for that handsome man. When my eyes attached to his, my heart leaped. I went, "God, is that you? Are you up there? Did you do that?" So we walked around a little bit, and talked, and I had a girlfriend with me, so I didn't have to be alone and have to go home with a man. So he said, "Can I take you home tonight?" I said, "Well, I'm with my girlfriend." He said, "I'll take you both home." "Oh, he's a nice guy." I said, "Okay." On the way home, he goes, "Where do you live?" I said, "In the little town of Lititz."

He said, "Well, I'm helping my family with their finances. They struggle, and so I work. I go to school during the day, but at night I drive a big feed truck. I drive one farm in Lititz, and I think the last name is Martin. Do you know them?" He said, "I think the man's name is Eli." I said, "Eli, that's my dad. You come to my farm?" By now, my heart is pounding. I'm sure this man is seeing me, "Oh, uptight," sitting next to him. And he said he comes to my farm. And then I said, "Oh, my dad has been saying to me, 'There's this really nice man who comes to the farm and delivers feed. You should come out and see him sometime'." But he came at 10 o'clock at night, and I was in bed by then. So I said, "No, I'm not interested in going out and seeing any feed man delivering feed to my farm at night."

Here, God had this arranged. This man, yes, I accepted a date from him. I could tell in my whole heart that God had moved in me and I didn't think God loved me. So we dated, we got married. We dated for a year and a half, and we got married. And what I loved about him; he had such respect for his family. When he'd come over to our house and hear the arguing, and fussing around, and my sister in a bad mood, he'd see all this, and he still was kind to me. He wanted to kiss me and I went, "I don't think so." I was really a hard human being. When a child doesn't have love, what do they have? They're negative and they're hurtful.

Dr. James Dobson: That goes for all of us, really.

Dona Fisher: I know, and that's one of the reasons why I wrote this book. So many children are being maybe fussed at when they shouldn't be. They're just little children, they need to be loved and encouraged. That was one of my reasons for writing the book. So, anyway, we dated for a year and a half, and got married, and I should have been the happiest woman in the world. Married the most handsome man I've ever met. Kind to his family, respectful. And when he came to our house, he would hug my mother. I couldn't understand how anybody could hug my mother, especially with what I got from her arms, and her hands, and her feet. But she loved my Herb. So we got married, and the first couple of years I know I must have been grumpy, not a happy woman at all. I just was not fulfilled. I accepted Herb's love, but I didn't have it deep in my heart.

Dr. James Dobson: Did he ask you to marry him?

Dona Fisher: Oh, yes, he did. I said yes right away, anything to get out of my home life. This was appealing, to say yes to Herb, to marry him. So anyway, when we were first married, he became a realtor, and I was so happy he wasn't a farmer, but a realtor takes a lot of time and phone calls, and he was loving that. Not that he loved me less, but I didn't see him that much. And so I'm at home, moping, unhappy, unfulfilled, and I said, "A baby'll do it. I think Herb, let's have a baby." So I got pregnant, and I miscarried that first child. That was devastating for me. I was sure God hated me; He didn't want me to have any children.

But three years later, I got pregnant with our little Beth, and then 18 months later, I got pregnant with Bonnie. And I was so happy with my little girls. They were beautiful, and I was so thrilled that God gave me two little girls to love, and to take up my time while my husband had become a workaholic. But he was happy in what he was doing, and I was happy that he was working and pleased. But, Doc, you'll never even imagine that this friend you're looking at would do this. All I knew to bring up children was discipline. I started doing to my little girls what my mother did to me.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, my.

Dona Fisher: I hated myself. It just, it was awful, terrible times for me.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, what is really amazing about your story is that you are such a kind, loving, beautiful woman today. And who would have believed that you had that past? That's really what surprised me so much about your book, because you somehow overcame it.

Roger Marsh: Well only God can transform our deepest wounds of rejection and turn them into opportunities for grace. You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and a powerful conversation featuring our own Dr. James Dobson and his in-studio guest, author Dona Fisher. To hear today's program again or if you'd like to share it with someone who needs a message of hope, use the Family Talk app or go to [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk).



Now on today's program, we heard part one of Dona Fisher sharing her remarkable story of how God transformed a broken relationship with her mother and turned it into a powerful ministry. Dona has written an inspiring book about this subject that captures the 50 year journey of this life-changing Bible study. The book is titled *Change of Pace: 50 Years of Shepherding God's Sheep with Love and Power*. And we'll be happy to send you a copy as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. You can request your copy online when you make a secure donation at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) and simply write the word "book" in the comment box. That's [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) and then write the word "book" in the comment box. You can also request your copy of *Change of Pace* when you call us at 877-732-6825. Or you can make your request known through the United States Postal Service. Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk P.O. Box 39000 Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code, 80949.

Well tomorrow marks the National Day of Prayer, a sacred time when Americans across the country will unite in seeking God's guidance for our country. As you prepare your heart for this important observance, we invite you to download our free resource that explores America's profound spiritual heritage. This beautifully crafted guide highlights inspiring prayers from our founding fathers and offers practical ways to intercede for our country. Visit [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) for more information on how to receive your complementary download. That's [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org).

Well I'm Roger Marsh and on behalf of Dr. Dobson and all of us here at the JDFI, thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time when Dona Fisher will continue sharing how God's love helped her break cycles of pain and create a new legacy of healing in her family. That's coming up right here on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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