



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: God Makes Lemonade – Part 2

Guest(s): Don and Brenda Jacobson

Air Date: September 22, 2026

Dr. James Dobson: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson, and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome back to Family Talk with Dr. James Dobson. I'm Roger Marsh. You know, some of life's hardest moments arrive without any warning, and in the middle of them, it can seem almost impossible that any good would come from this pain. Well, on our last edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we heard the beginning of Don and Brenda Jacobson's story, a hunting accident that left Don fighting for his life. Well, as Brenda was facing the reality that her young husband, even if he survived, might not be able to walk again, well, you can imagine that part two of that story is even more incredible. On today's Family Talk broadcast, Don and Brenda will rejoin Dr. Dobson to reveal how God met them in the darkness and inspired their book called *God Makes Lemonade*. Now before we begin, here's Dr. Dobson to set the stage for us.

Dr. James Dobson: Most of our listeners know that they don't have a lot of control over which lemons they get and how they get them. The Bible says in John 16:33, that "in this world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I've overcome the world." And I know of no philosophy or no thought in life that puts those two ideas together. This is really going to be tough. You're going to be stressed. Your life may be in danger and probably will be, but be of good cheer. Somehow, you know, that is a contradiction in Scripture. But we know why, because God says, I am there. And even when you go through those hard times, I will be there. And sometimes I'll choose to make lemonade out of your lemons. So we're going to talk about that concept today. I think it's a great one.

Roger Marsh: Well, I certainly have to agree. And now here is that conversation featuring Dr. James Dobson and his guests, Don and Brenda Jacobson, on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, Don and Brenda, welcome back to Family Talk.

Brenda Jacobson: Thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: Don and Brenda Jacobson have been colleagues and friends of Shirley and me for many years. Don was the owner of Multnomah Publishers for 14 years before he sold it to Random House. I'm still half mad at him for doing that. He

published a number of my magnificent books, including *Love for a Lifetime*. Multnomah published that book in 1988. I think that was before you took over, and sold at least a million copies, probably more than that. But also *Night Light for Couples*, which was your idea, Don, and then *Night Light for Parents*. Honestly, those are two of the books that I'm most proud of, and I appreciate working with you on it. Also *Marriage Under Fire* and a number of other books. And Brenda has been a mentor to moms for many years. They have four children. Great kids, I might say. And we want to talk about your own book, Don, and you've come up not only with a concept about lemonade and have written a book called *God Makes Lemonade: True Stories That Sweeten and Inspire*. But this is going to be a whole series.

Don Jacobson: We're hoping so.

Dr. James Dobson: It's almost an enterprise. Isn't that what you have in mind?

Don Jacobson: Well, we sure hope so. We believe that just the response we've had from people so far seems like it's touching a nerve. So, I mean, Jesus is really clear. If you're alive, you're going to have tribulation sometime. I mean, whether you have had it or will have it or are in the middle of it, people are going to go through tough times and the fact of the matter is that we have little control over it.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, at the end of the program last time, I mean, that was a cliffhanger because you had gone through this terrible accident. And then you're at the hospital and really hanging between life and death. And we know you survived, but tell us how. What happened the rest of that night?

Don Jacobson: Well, what the doctor was especially concerned about was the fact that I'd laid out there in that water for so long and the pellets had perforated my intestines and so now he was afraid of gas gangrene. Because inside your intestines live these things called anaerobic bacteria, and they're great inside. But once outside, they cause serious damage. And so he needed to get me into a hyperbaric chamber as quickly as they could. And at the time, there was only one in Oregon, and that was at Providence Hospital. So they made the calls, and it was available. Otherwise, I would have had to go to San Francisco or Seattle. So they shipped me down there. And again, they won't let Brenda go in the helicopter. They won't let her go in the ambulance because they're afraid I'm not going to make it. So they shipped me down there and got me in the hyperbaric chamber.

Dr. James Dobson: And I've been there. That's a chamber where the air pressure, the oxygen.

Don Jacobson: Pure oxygen.

Dr. James Dobson: Is very, very intense. And you can't even, you're locked in there.

Don Jacobson: I have never had claustrophobia in my life before, Doctor. But I will tell you, in there for an hour at a time, I started going crazy. I remember it. I remember this

one wise doctor coming up to me. I was starting to panic. And he just said, "Son, this is going to save your life." And I just remember his wise counsel, and just he'd calm me down.

Dr. James Dobson: Had to talk to you through a speaker.

Don Jacobson: Yeah, that's right. And I was wired for sound. They had tubes going everywhere, every antibiotic known to man flowing through me, and I was in critical condition. And my folks were missionaries up in Canada at the time, and they flew down, and they didn't realize how severe it really was until my mom describes coming into the critical care unit and seeing my pulse jumping out of my neck about three quarters of an inch just going you know. But I was in critical for nine days but the most interesting day was the eighth day because our friend Eric Weber came back to see me and he said something about being in critical condition and I said are people afraid I'm going to die? And he said, "Well, Don, you're in critical condition." I said, "Tell him I'm going to be okay. God showed me that if someone found me before morning, I would live." And it's like God was waiting for that proclamation. The very next day, I'm out of critical. I'm out of critical. And in that hospital for 14 days, while I'm there, God starts showing me some things. I was in commercial construction at the time and He showed me that I was supposed to go back to Multnomah School of the Bible and finish up school. Also out of the blue one day, and I'm in the hospital, I said to Brenda, I said, "We're going to be living at a camp." I'm just out of the blue. And sure enough, three months later, we're living out of Trout Creek Bible Camp, taking care of their horses in the off-season and working as program director for them during the summer.

Dr. James Dobson: And Brenda, you more or less nursed him back to health, didn't you?

Brenda Jacobson: Yes, it took months, and we took that red betadine that looked like blood and had to clean out wound four times a day.

Don Jacobson: This the woman that can't take a sliver.

Brenda Jacobson: Yes. Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: You were praying the whole way, weren't you?

Brenda Jacobson: Yes. Now, wounds that big don't just heal. The skin has to grow over it and they put some kind of mesh in there, didn't they?

Don Jacobson: They did. The stomach lining, the muscle lining was all damaged, and you don't grow that back. So I have a Teflon mesh that holds my stomach in, and it's had to have been replaced about four different times.

Dr. James Dobson: So you've had surgery four times since then?

Don Jacobson: Well, actually many more times than that, but four times here. There's been one other major accident.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. Now we're going to quickly transition to your book, *God Makes Lemonade: True Stories that Sweeten and Inspire*. And it's hard to see how God could take that terrible accident and all of the health problems that it has created for you and turn that into something good. But in fact, He has.

Don Jacobson: He really has.

Dr. James Dobson: How?

Don Jacobson: In the book, it refers to my friend, but my friend was my father-in-law, and he came to me and said, "Don, you know, all these years you've worked with your body, and you're not going to be able to do that anymore. You're going to have to start working with your head." And that ultimately, I remember thinking, "Wow, that's a little callous, John. Come on, I'm just out of the hospital." But he was right, and over time, we got involved in Christian publishing. Actually, I went to work at Multnomah Press, where my first boss was a lady by the name of Brenda Jacobson.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that right? You were the boss.

Don Jacobson: She was my boss. And I'm sure if you had much more time, she'd tell you what a wonderful employee I was.

Dr. James Dobson: But you were married by then.

Don Jacobson: Oh, yeah. This is after the accident. So I was working for my wife. And she was pregnant with our Danae, our oldest child.

Dr. James Dobson: Danae.

Don Jacobson: Exactly. True story. This is a true story. And you'd think a publisher would do anything to land an author. But had we had a boy, he was going to be named Ryan. That's an honest, true story, and we weren't copying. It's just those were the two names we liked. But, yeah, I ended up working at Multnomah Press, and then later we started a company called Questar and published a little book called *The Beginner's Bible* that had done super well. And then in 1992 had the opportunity to buy Multnomah Press from Multnomah School of the Bible. So I've been involved in publishing since '84.

Dr. James Dobson: And for the next 14 years you were the owner of Multnomah.

Don Jacobson: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Published not only my books but also Bruce Wilkinson's books, *Jabez*.

Don Jacobson: Yep, yep.

Dr. James Dobson: And then his next book, the vine.

Don Jacobson: Yeah, *Secrets of the Vine*.

Dr. James Dobson: Don, this book on lemonade is filled with stories like this, not only yours but many others of people who just really went through terrible circumstances, and God was there and made lemonade out of what looked like an unpalatable drink, if you will. Tell a story about the woman that was considering suicide.

Don Jacobson: Yeah, she was a single mom who lost her job. She lost her house. She lost her hope. She lost everything. And she just describes being so discouraged one night she decides to end it all. And she puts her son in front of the TV and leaves him there and goes upstairs and has a bottle of pills and has a bottle of whiskey. And she describes having drank half of that whiskey and just having a handful of pills in her hand. And then just as she's getting ready to take them, she hears a noise. And she looks over and hears this little note coming under the door. And she looks over there and she can see big letters that her little son had written, I love you, Mom. And in that moment, what in the world am I doing? What am I doing? And she scrambles and throws the pills aside and throws it inside, I love you too, and starts to slide it back under. And next thing you know, the little boy's waiting on the other side, and he pulls that out right from under her hands. And they open the door, and they fall into each other's arms. And God just sends this little messenger to tell her, you are loved. You are loved. And she'd tell you today that her life isn't perfect. But her son's growing up into being a young man, and she's got that note forever, and she knows that she's loved, even in the hard times. She'd tell you that. Her lemonade in that moment was just realizing how much she's actually loved and how much she's actually needed by a little boy.

There's a great verse in Isaiah 50:10 and 11. It says, "Let him who walks in darkness trust in the name of the Lord." And when you're in the middle of those hard times, God is waiting and watching. Are they going to trust Me? Are they going to trust Me? And it's so hard not to want to go light up your own fire and go make it happen on your own. And just that place of trusting Him is huge. And what we know about God is He's not going to share His glory with another. And sometimes I think He lets us go through those situations to show us what He knows to be true about us, that He knows we'll trust Him.

Dr. James Dobson: Brenda, in our introduction of you, I referred to your mentoring of women. You have within your church this little group, and you meet with them how often?

Brenda Jacobson: Once a week.

Dr. James Dobson: And you hear an awful lot of discouragement and depression and tough circumstances. And is this book valid? Is this what you do with the women who are really beyond hope in their own eyes?

Brenda Jacobson: Oh, yes. People's true stories of what's going on in their life is some of the best ways to encourage others. It's the best ways for us to learn. In our group, we talk about the principles that they are trying to teach their children through story. And it makes it so much easier for us to remember it.

Dr. James Dobson: So this book would be very useful in small group Bible studies and support groups like the ones you have run?

Don Jacobson: I think so. I think it'd be really encouraging to people. And as I said earlier, you know, when you're in the middle of it, you don't want somebody telling you, hey, it's going to be all right. And Brenda's talking about stories. Isn't it interesting that Scripture says Jesus always taught with stories? Always. Not sometimes. Always taught with stories. And, you know, I just, you know, Scripture also talks about how what was written before was for an encouragement so we'd learn from it. And I think that it'd be a really helpful tool for people.

Dr. James Dobson: When people are in the midst of the lemonade, they really don't like to hear Romans 8:28.

Don Jacobson: No, they don't.

Dr. James Dobson: All things work together for the good of them that love the Lord. Are you kidding me? I've got a child in the hospital. I don't know if he or she is going to survive. And you're telling me all things work for the good of them that love the Lord and are called according to His purpose. That almost implies that God sent this. This is His plan. He wanted you to suffer. And that's not the time to say that.

Dr. James Dobson: It's not the time. And, you know, I think things are father-filtered. He definitely allows us these things to happen. I think one of the things we need to do is to maybe change the goal line. We expect things to happen to be fixed immediately. We expect them now. And when we look at Paul, what he's saying about our light and momentary tribulations producing an eternal weight of glory, well, that's maybe the finish line for us is beyond. It's not this life. It's the next life. In fact, we know that to be true. And so we're just trying to help people gain a bigger perspective, a broader perspective on the lemons that they might be experiencing.

So to that person, I'd say your pain's real. It's undeniable. The finish line for you may not be in this life. But the one thing you can do is love your way out and start thinking about other people and focusing on other people, and it will lighten the load.

Dr. James Dobson: I wrote about this general subject in my book, *When God Doesn't Make Sense*. And I said something toward the end of the book that was criticized by at least

one theologian and maybe some others that I'm not sure of. But I said many people do have to forgive God.

Not that he's done anything wrong. He's perfect. God is God. But you can become bitter, especially when you lose a loved one or a child, and you can hold Him responsible for that, and you have to forgive Him. You have to come to the point where you say, Lord, I trust you, and I accept you. Don, I don't want to run out of time today without your having a chance to tell us that all of the royalty from this book goes to a spirit. cause. What is it?

Don Jacobson: Yeah, it's called the Lemonade Foundation. It's actually something that we're just setting up that Brenda's going to be primarily involved with. And we knew God had something special when we started working on this book. And I would come home and say to Brenda, I think this is it. I think this is it. And she'd say, no, that's not it. That's not it. I came home one day when she was sitting in her spot where she has her quiet time, and I said, I know what it is. And she said, okay, tell me. And so I told her, and tears just started roiling down her face. And she goes, that's it. And I said, no, right. And what I told her is I said, you and I are supposed to do something about the orphans and widows of our day, single moms and their kids. And so all the royalties are going to go towards that.

Dr. James Dobson: And the scripture is very clear about our responsibility to do that. You quoted a Scripture at lunch when we ate together.

Don Jacobson: James 1:27.

Dr. James Dobson: Quote it again.

Don Jacobson: Yeah. "This is true religion according to God the Father that you look after orphans and widows." And the idea of look after is the same word when you're talking about the sick, to go visit the sick. And it means God the Father wants you to enter in. You're not a doctor. You are, but we're not doctors. And so we're not there to heal them, but the idea of visit means to enter into their sufferings. And that's what God the Father, James goes out of his way, God the Father wants you to do this for his kids, the marginalized. And nobody needs our encouragement more than these women. They're heroes. And we both know plenty.

My sister is a single mom, and these ladies need our help. And what they feel like is – I've had many single moms say we feel like AIDS victims. We feel like we're untouchables. Don't touch us. We feel so marginalized. So we're hoping to encourage families to create margin for them, to bring single women into their... Brenda's vision is to bring single women into every home group, every church group.

Dr. James Dobson: How will you help them?

Brenda Jacobson: My hope is that we can encourage churches. to bring single moms into their midst and encourage them.

Dr. James Dobson: Financially?

Brenda Jacobson: Financially, if that's what's necessary, but maybe encouragement, maybe babysitting, maybe all kinds of areas. Maybe they need their toilet fixed. Everything is on them. And if they could be supported, that would be, and we had talked about doing that through spa days. Maybe encouraging women of the church to put on a day specifically for single moms in their church and bring single moms from outside the church and just make them feel special.

Dr. James Dobson: I've said on many occasions that toughest job in the universe is the responsibility of a single mother who has to earn a living and come home exhausted and then be a mom, cook, clean, do homework, give baths, get them in bed and get up tomorrow morning, get them off to whoever's going to take care of them and do that day after day after day. I mean, there's not that much energy in the human body. And so there's so many ways that we can put an arm around them. I have a gift for her that we can give her. It's a book called *God Makes Lemonade*. And it might be very, very encouraging. Once again, the subtitle is *True Stories That Sweeten and Inspire*. That's poetic. That's really beautiful. And that's what you're trying to do is to take people who might be embittered by the circumstances of life and show them the Scriptures and show them the truths and help sweeten and inspire.

Don Jacobson: That's right, doctor.

Dr. James Dobson: And you told me about this two years ago. You've been working on it a long time and there will be more.

Don Jacobson: I hope so. We believe so.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Well, blessings to you, Don. I have loved you and appreciated working with you for a long time. You're just a real brother to me. And I do appreciate it.

Don Jacobson: Thanks for having us on.

Brenda Jacobson: Thank you.

Roger Marsh: True stories that sweeten and inspire. That's the heart of what Don and Brenda Jacobson shared with us today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, a reminder that even our most bitter circumstances can become something God uses for good. Here on Family Talk, you've heard part two of a moving conversation featuring Dr. James Dobson and his longtime friends, Don and Brenda Jacobson. To hear this program again or to share it with a friend, you can go to drjamesdobson.org. And while you're there, also learn more about Don and Brenda's book called *God Makes Lemonade*.

You know, at this very moment, right now, there is someone who is sitting in the middle of their own difficult season and wondering if God still has a plan. Maybe

that's your situation right now. You know, your partnership with us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute puts a program like this one into that listener's ears at just the right moment. And that's the work that we get to do together here at the JDFI, carrying biblical hope to families all across America. Now, if today's conversation has been an encouragement to you, we invite you to join us. Your gift of any amount helps to keep this ministry going strong. You can make a donation through our secure website at jdfi.org. You can also call a member of our constituent care team at 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Or if you prefer, you can send your tax-deductible donation through the U.S. Postal Service. Our ministry mailing address is the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code 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 tune in 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.

Dr. James Dobson: If you've ever felt like you're just running in circles, it may be because you are.

Roger Marsh: Here's today's Dr. Dobson Minute with Dr. James Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: An experiment was once carried out by the great French naturalist, John Henry Fabre. He took a number of processionary caterpillars, so-called because they always march in unison, and he lined them around the inner edge of a flower pot, forming a complete circle. For three days, he monitored them as they marched around the edge of the pot. How many of us have found ourselves wandering aimlessly around the elusive circle of success, trudging day in and day out behind all the other career-oriented caterpillars? If you found yourself breathlessly chasing the guy in front of you, let me suggest that you break free. Spend some time with your family. Have some good friends over for dinner. Read a good book just for pleasure. Take a walk with someone you love. Life is simply too short to be spent plodding around in endless circles.

Roger Marsh: For more information, visit drdobsonminute.org.

Hello, friends. Roger Marsh here. In today's rapidly changing world, the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute remains committed to our founding mission to preserve and promote the institution of family and the biblical principles on which it is based. Thanks to your prayers and faithful support, we're reaching millions through our daily family talk broadcasts, online resources, and policy initiatives. As President Reagan wisely said, freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. And that's why we are working tirelessly to uphold faith, strengthen families, and our God-given freedoms. Thank you for standing with us in this mission. Together, we're making a difference for generations to come.