



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Overcoming the Shame of the Past – Part 2

**Guest(s):** Paul and Marilyn Hontz

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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 everyone and welcome to Family Talk with your host, psychologist and bestselling author, Dr. James Dobson. I'm Roger Marsh. In just a moment, we will hear the conclusion of Dr. Dobson's powerful interview with author Marilyn Hontz, as she tells how God relieved the hurt of her abusive past and that allowed her to let go of the shame and the anger that she felt.

Marilyn's husband, Paul, will also be joining in on the conversation and he will share how her background created underlying pain that lasted actually into the first few years of their marriage. As we mentioned yesterday, today's broadcast we'll discuss some tough issues that may not be fitting for some of our younger listeners. So we ask for parents and adults to use discretion. Here now is part two of "Overcoming The Shame of the Past" on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

**Dr. James Dobson:** Well, Marilyn, you really captured our hearts last time as you talked about the struggles of your early childhood, especially in your relationship with your father. And then your mother died when you were 14 there at the beginning of the teen period. And junior high is a very, very tough time anyway, and especially for a girl to lose her mother in that way.

You've talked about this abusive childhood. First of all, I'd like you to tell us what the experiences that you described in your book, *Shame Lifter*, evoke in people. What do they say to you when you speak on this subject? Do they say, "That's exactly where I am, that's what I've been through."

**Marilyn Hontz:** I cannot believe how many people will say to me, "I relate to your story. I had a parent like yours, like your dad." Or in some cases, they had a mom like that too. But I think the thing that surprised me the most is the many people that have said to me, "Your story is just like mine, except my father was an alcoholic in addition to being treated the way you were treated, but he was also an alcoholic."

Dr. James Dobson: Paul, I appreciate you joining us today. You were sitting right beside Marilyn yesterday as we were talking about her story, and I wanted her to tell it, and so I didn't invite you to be part of it. But after the program, you said you had learned some things that you didn't even know about Marilyn, even though you were married to her, about this pain inside and this anger that she had because it didn't come out. Most people who are angry get angry at other people, but that's not Marilyn's personality.

Paul Hontz: No. I would never have witnessed that at all during those early years of our marriage. From the time I've known her, in fact, one of the things that drew me to her when we first met so many years ago was her heart for the Lord, her sensitivity to other people, her orientation to serving and caring for others.

And so never a hint in my experience of all, she told me of course information about her background and things that had happened, but I never picked up any hint at all that under the surface there was this continuing pain. It seemed like it was something in the past and had happened in the past, and it was left in the past, and I wasn't conscious of how very real it was to her in her present.

Dr. James Dobson: In fact, hearing her tell the story yesterday.

Paul Hontz: Oh, man.

Dr. James Dobson: You got tears in your eyes.

Paul Hontz: Oh, every time I hear this story, it affects me that same way. When I read her book, it affected me that same way. But I can tell you, I never saw that evident either in terms of how she had input into the lives of our children or had input into my life. And I only saw God at work in her life.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, Marilyn, when you talk about shame, that goes straight to the heart of the problem, which was a sexual abuse that you experienced when you were five years old. It always amazes me that women in particular who were sexually abused as a child feel responsible somehow for that, though one a thing they could have done to prevent it, and yet they're victims of it and the rest of their life they're feeling dirty, like it's something I did to myself.

Marilyn Hontz: So true.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you experience that?

Marilyn Hontz: Oh, most definitely, yes. And in fact, the person who abused me was not my father, and I want to make that clear. It was a guest that was staying in our home. And the words that he said to me were, "Do not tell anybody because you will be in big trouble."

Now how his words could overpower me like that, I don't know, but they did and I believed him. And I believed that I must be a very bad girl if I can't say something what this person did to me. I didn't understand what he was doing. I was crying and it wouldn't stop. And I remember thinking, "Well, I can't tell my dad because I know my daddy, he doesn't love me anyway and that's going to make him really not love me."

Dr. James Dobson: He didn't like you to cry anyway.

Marilyn Hontz: No, he didn't want me to cry. And I remember saying, as much as I loved my mother, I didn't want to tell her because I felt so bad. See, that's what shame does. It's the feelings of it's not only you've made a mistake, it's you are the mistake. And I felt so responsible for what happened. And I remember even crying out to a person who was in the room during one of the times and calling for that person to help me. It was right there. And they didn't do anything. And so then I thought, "Oh, I must deserve this." There's nothing I can do. But I felt so powerless.

Dr. James Dobson: And that followed you into your adult life?

Marilyn Hontz: Oh, it did. And it so strips you of your confidence, it strips you of feeling worthy. And I kept it behind a closet door in my heart, so to speak, for 47 years. Now, I will say this, when Paul and I were first talking about getting married, I did mention it to him just real briefly, but I just said I was sexually molested and do you still want to marry me? That kind of thing.

And he said, "Well, yes." I said, "Well, don't talk to me about it ever again, because I don't want to talk about it." I could not talk about it. And what I realized is I had been trapped for all of those years and I could have been freed had I been able to talk about it. And that's why I'm so hoping that people who have experienced this, both men and women, I've had men come and share it.

"I've been sexually abused but not told anybody." I had a woman tell me 65, she's 65 years old, "I was sexually abused, but Marilyn, haven't been able to tell a word about it till right now." And I'm saying, if we can be able to have safe people to share that with and get over it that we are not responsible that this happened to us. We are victims. There can be healing.

Dr. James Dobson: *Shame Lifter*, it's an interesting title. Explain where the connection to the Lord is in this? Shame Lifter, is he the shame lifter?

Marilyn Hontz: He is the ultimate shame lifter. And again, the Lord after 47 years, let me just kind of go back here a little bit. Because I didn't realize, like I said, that I dealt with shame. And I had a woman come up to me after I spoke one time and she said to me, "Marilyn, that was a great message that you gave." And I felt like I would be bragging if I said, "Oh, thank you." So I put my head down, I said,

"Thank you." And I said, "But it was nothing." Typical response from me. And she took a hold of my arm.

Dr. James Dobson: That says a lot about you, Marilyn.

Marilyn Hontz: Yes, it does. I know. How I used to be. Okay? The Lord's helping me. And anyway, she said, "Do you know what your response tells me?" And I said, "No. What?" She said, "Your response tells me that you deal with a shame-based perspective of life." I went, "Shame-based perspective of life. What in the world is that?" And I remember driving from that conference and it was an hour ride home and I'm saying, "Lord, what's shame?"

And hey, isn't shame a good thing?" Because there is such a thing as good shame and the Lord can use that in our life to move us to make some changes in our life that need to happen. And but what he showed me was that there's also a thing called unhealthy shame or a toxic shame that when it's rooted inside of us, like those messages, those negative messages that I talked about earlier, that they can then become us.

They mold us, they shape us, and we become what we think. And so that day when I got home, I remember going into my bedroom and just putting my face flat down on the carpet and getting carpet fuzz all over my face, crying and saying, "Lord Jesus, show me shame in my life if it's truly there." And it's like for the first time, I allowed Him to open the door of my heart, that closet door that I had leaned against my weight so heavily on that door to keep it shut for 47 years.

And He slowly just took me in His arms and opened that door and let me peer into that closet and allowed me to look again, once again at that abuse that happened to me. And it wasn't that I had forgotten that this is not some recalled memory. I mean, I lived with it every day, but just put it over in this corner of my heart. And when he opened that door, of course I'm sobbing because I didn't want to look, but He gently had me look. And the first thing that the Lord spoke to my heart was, "How did you feel when that happened?"

And I said, "Father, I felt powerless." I said, "My arms were held down. I couldn't do anything. I was powerless." And the Lord said to me, "At one point, my arms were held down when I was being nailed on the cross." And He said, "I too was rendered powerless." And I said, "But Lord Jesus, there was someone else there and they could have helped me and they didn't help me one of the times." And He said, "Marilyn, I had loved ones all around me when I was being nailed to the cross and no one helped me."

I said, "But Lord..." I kept trying to say, "But my case is worse than yours," kind of thing. And I said, "But I felt forsaken." And the Lord brought back those words to me. He too felt forsaken on the cross. But He said, "Those were not my last words on the cross." And I had to really check that out to make sure that was

right because the last words were, "Into your hands, father, I commit my spirit." And He said, "Marilyn, that's what you're going to need to do is commit your spirit, your crushed spirit into my hands."

Dr. James Dobson: Isn't it interesting that Jesus also said on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Marilyn Hontz: He asked too, didn't He?

Dr. James Dobson: Felt that way too.

Marilyn Hontz: He did.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Marilyn Hontz: And then the last part of that was, "But Marilyn, you are no longer powerless. You have my resurrection power available to you." He said, "I didn't stay on the cross. I rose again. And you have that same exact power that raised me from the dead in your life to literally raise you from the pit of shame where you are, the pit of abuse, the pit of those negative lies and messages that you have internalized in your heart and to be freed from that."

Dr. James Dobson: You mentioned shame that is not always destructive. And there will be people saying, "When? Why is it ever appropriate to feel shame?" Well, I think in a sense shame can be a response to willful on purpose, sinful behavior that grieved the heavenly spirit. And you can feel the conviction from that. Conviction is a form of shame. I am undone. I am guilty. But then if it leads on to forgiveness and restoration, it is a good thing.

Marilyn Hontz: It is.

Dr. James Dobson: But harboring something where you're a victim of someone else's assault or even shame that continues after forgiveness has occurred. I think of Charles Wesley's song that says, "He breaks the power of canceled sin." The sin has been canceled, it's been forgiven, and the power is still there.

Marilyn Hontz: Well, I think the first thing, and you've mentioned it, is to recognize that shame or that abuse and then like you said, to be able to talk to someone about that. So I believe the first thing is to recognize it. For me to recognize that abuse and to call it abuse and to say what it was, was the first step for me in the beginning of healing. And you talk about that light coming in, what it does is it produces lightness in your soul.

I wish I could describe that more, but that's what will happen is a lightness will come into your soul. And I believe after that then we, the next step I took personally was I had to replace the shame language because I spoke it so fluently in my life. "I am not worthy, I'm inadequate, I'm not good enough," and

that kind of thing. And so if you're going to replace something, what are you going to replace it with? I needed to replace it with truth, which was God's truth.

Dr. James Dobson: Marilyn, I want to share a story with you that goes so way back. I don't think I've ever shared this on the air. It actually came from a book. I don't remember the name of it, but I remember the story. It was about a little girl who was an orphan and she was in an orphanage. And what she longed for more than anything in the world was a family. And it happened I think nine times and people would come to get her to adopt her and who knows why, but it never worked.

And so those children would bounce back to the orphanage and then what is the child to think? "I'm totally unworthy. Nobody would love me. They tried to love me and they couldn't." And it happened over and over and over again. And finally a family came that just really seemed to love her. And one morning she came in and found her little suitcase in the entryway and she hadn't even known that they didn't love her too.

And they took her back. And she was describing this to a room full of people of how difficult that was. And she looked around and they were all crying and she said, "Oh no, don't cry for me. I love Jesus Christ today because of that experience. He brought me to him, my dependence on him came out of the pain of those years." Do you feel that way about your childhood? That even though it was difficult, that the Lord used it and it was for a purpose?

Marilyn Hontz: Yes. I so believe that wholeheartedly. And while I really wouldn't want to go through everything again, I can truly sit here and say that God used my past to shape me, to mold me as to who I am today. It gave me such a dependency on the Lord Jesus, and I would not trade that for anything because He truly has become my all-in-all through all of this. I had no one else but Him.

Paul Hontz: That's what it means not to waste your sorrows. Everybody has sorrows. You can waste them or they can be something that presses you into the heart of God.

Marilyn Hontz: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Let me role play with you, can I?

Marilyn Hontz: Okay.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. Suppose I am a woman that has just heard you speak and I come up afterward and I say, Marilyn, I'm grateful I was moved by what you had to say, but you don't understand this deep pain inside. I cannot forgive and I can't get away from the shame and I am destined to spend the rest of my life with it, and

I just ask the Lord to understand me because I can't go where you went. What do you say?

Marilyn Hontz: I've had women tell me that, and I understand that because you see what they're really at the heart of is forgiveness and forgiveness is a very, I think it's probably one of the most difficult things we are called to do.

Dr. James Dobson: It's not a suggestion, is it?

Marilyn Hontz: No, it's not. Because the word says forgive. It doesn't say try to forgive. It says, "Forgive as I have forgiven you, Jesus says." And you look at that word forgiveness and right in the middle of that word is a very special word. You know what that is? It's "Give."

Dr. James Dobson: Give, yes.

Marilyn Hontz: Oh, give, give, give. And it's so difficult to forgive. But I would say to this person that the Lord understands how hard it is for us to forgive. And so He comes alongside of us and helps us. See for Him, it's instantaneous. I mean, He can just forgive us with a snap of the finger. Yes, I forgive you. But He understands that for us, it's a process and He works with us in that process.

I would also tell this lady something that maybe sounds kind of funny, but I use the concept of the Jesus jail. And that's a concept that Chuck, Author Chuck Lynch has used. And I kind of expanded it a little bit. But if you can picture a jail, and let's say you have someone in your life that you just really do not want to forgive.

And what you do is you mentally take that person and you put them into that Jesus jail and you say to the Lord, "Lord, I cannot forgive this person right now even though I know at some point I need to, but in the meantime I'm going to give him over or her over to your keeping. You are the perfect judge. You know and see everything. I'm going to give up my right for revenge right now." Because you see, when something evil is done to us, at least for me, then I want to repay.

Dr. James Dobson: Want to strike back.

Marilyn Hontz: Yes, we do. And some days I'll start to take that person out of the Jesus jail, I'll start saying, "Oh, why did that person do that to me? And don't they know how they betrayed me or they hurt me," or whatever? And the Lord says, "Uh-uh, did you put them in my keeping or not?" And I have to replace them right back into that Jesus jail.

And I have to tell you, that the 47 years that I had this abuser in my life, I was not going to forgive him either. It's only truly been a year ago that I have been able to take that person out of the Jesus jail. I cannot tell you how wonderful it

feels, but I could not have done that earlier. But the Lord knew I needed to put him in the Jesus jail.

Dr. James Dobson: Marilyn, we appreciate you more than you know. You got such a tender heart and such a great heart for the Lord. And thank you for all the prayers for Shirley and me and for our family. You have been a real blessing in our lives.

Marilyn Hontz: Oh, well, it's an honor for me. So thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, our guests have been Paul and Marilyn Hontz. And Marilyn with all of her responsibilities as a pastor's wife and the mother of five kids, four girls and one boy, right?

Marilyn Hontz: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: And then six grandchildren, she's found time to write her second book, *Shame Lifter*. And I tell you, this is a book you want to read, especially if you have personally experienced some of the pain in childhood for whatever reason that Marilyn talked about.

And Paul, you said that everybody has one way or another, that pain is inevitable, sorrow is inevitable. And there are two kinds of people in the world, those who are hurting and those who will hurt. And the Lord speaks to that issue and tells us to cast all our cares on him. And that's kind of a bottom line, Marilyn, for what you've attempted to do here, shame lifter. Thank you for being our guest and we will look forward to talking to you again.

Marilyn Hontz: Thank you for having us.

Roger Marsh: Boy, that's a powerful insight and reminder from Dr. James Dobson today here on Family Talk, talking about the fact that all of us will go through seasons either where we are going to be hurt or we've been hurt, and the question is how do we deal with it, to where do we go to find healing for those hurts? Over the past couple of days here on Family Talk, Dr. Dobson has been talking with Marilyn Hontz, pastor's wife and author of the book called *Shame Lifter: Replacing Your Fears and Tears with Forgiveness, Truth, and Hope*.

We've got a link for that book up at our website, [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). In addition to part one and part two of this conversation and on today's program, we welcome Marilyn's husband, Pastor Paul Hontz in on the conversation as well. What's fascinating about this story is not only did Marilyn have to go through the humiliation and the pain of the emotional and verbal abuse at the hands of her pastor father, but the fact that God also led her down a path of spiritual growth with the great godly example of her mother, and then Marilyn's mother passed away when she was just a teenager.



She was only 14 years of age as she said goodbye to her mom here in this life. When you think about the tragedy, the pain of losing a parent and not being able to articulate that, to just kind of keep smiling on through, it's no wonder that Pastor Paul Hontz discovered pretty radically that his wife was in need of some serious healing and was there every step of the way to walk her through this process.

Marilyn writes about her experience in her book called *Shame Lifter: Replacing Your Fears and Tears with Forgiveness, Truth, and Hope*. We've got a link for the book up at [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). If you're interested in getting a CD copy, both part one and part two of this conversation, call our constituent care team. The number is toll-free 877-732-6825.

That's 877-732-6825. Of course, when you think about girls and the relationship they have with their moms or their dads growing up, when I think of Dr. Dobson's landmark book called *Bringing Up Girls*, many of the principles he wrote about in that book a couple of decades ago are still very applicable today. We are pleased to announce a brand new 10 part email series from Dr. James Dobson and his colleague Dr. Owen Strachan, who is the senior director of the new Dobson Culture Center, and they address the modern issues that young women are facing in the new *Bringing Up Girls* 10 part email series.

Now, the 10-day email series is absolutely free. To get yours, all you have to do is go online to [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk), and click the button for the *Bringing Up Girls* 10 day email series. Again, [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org), either click on the home page or go to the Family Talk web page as well. And thanks so much for your prayers and faithful financial support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute as we approach the Thanksgiving holiday and the end of 2024.

It's been a very monumental year in the culture to be sure. We really truly covet and appreciate your prayers and your ongoing financial support of this completely listener supported broadcast outreach. Remember, you can give a gift online through our secure website at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). That's [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). You can also give a gift over the phone when you call 877-732-6825.

That's 877-732-6825, or you can write to us through our secure ministry mailing address. Write to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado. The zip code, 80949. Again, that's Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Or you could just put the initials JDFI for short.

P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado. The zip code, 80949. Well, I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for listening to Family Talk today. Be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

Announcer:

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