



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Women and Friendships – Part 2

Guest(s): Dee Brestin

Air Date: March 13, 2025

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.

Dee Brestin: Ruth stood by Naomi's side. When Naomi failed to appreciate her, Ruth was steadfast. When Naomi was needing a lot of help, Ruth stood there and was steadfast. And when Naomi says, "I've come back empty" and hurt Ruth's feelings, Ruth is steadfast. And I said, "This is the kind of unfailing love we need to show each other."

Roger Marsh: Well welcome once again to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Question for you. Have you ever had a friend who stood by you through every storm? Whose loyalty never wavered even when times got tough? Well that kind of steadfast friendship is at the heart of today's edition of the Family Talk conversation. On our last broadcast, Dr. Dobson and author Dee Brestin began exploring the importance of godly friendships between women revealing how loneliness and self-esteem challenges can be overcome through authentic connection.

On today's Family Talk broadcast, they'll continue that discussion drawing wisdom from biblical examples of faithful friendship and mentoring relationships. Dee Brestin's book, *The Friendships of Women: The Beauty and Power of God's Plan for Us*, offers profound insights about these special bonds. And while this conversation was prepared with women in mind, guys, I encourage you to keep it right here, understanding these dynamics can help you better support the women in your life, whether that's your wife, your daughter, your sister, even your mom. You'll also gain valuable insights about how men and women approach friendships differently and that might just explain some things you've always wondered about. So here now is Dr. James Dobson to introduce our guest, Dee Brestin, on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: You've been writing on subjects related to this for some time. I understand you wrote a fishermen Bible study guide that sold over a hundred thousand copies. That series, however, was devoted to inductive kind of reasoning, where you allow the reader to draw their own conclusions from Scripture. And this one you're giving us your conclusions. And one of them is that you feel the relationship between women is critical to the mental health of women and also to the marital relationship.

Dee Brestin: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Having a good friend actually makes a marriage better. How?

Dee Brestin: Well, the example I think of from scripture is Mary and Elizabeth. When Mary faced a crisis, she was unwed and pregnant, I don't think it was coincidental that God tells her through Gabriel, "Even Elizabeth, your relative, who was said to be barren is also with child." And Mary is insightful and she hurries to go and spend three months with Elizabeth.

Dr. James Dobson: Isn't that interesting?

Dee Brestin: And I believe that was valuable mentoring time. I think Elizabeth was Mary's premarital counselor, that she modeled for Mary how to be a godly wife. Mary was just a teenager and she was going to face immense obstacles. She and Joseph were not to have sexual relationships until after Jesus was born. And I think that the sexual relationship in those early months is a balm that can sew the hurts that a couple give to each other unintentionally, but they weren't going to have that.

Dr. James Dobson: Furthermore, they were going to be accused of adultery.

Dee Brestin: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: They were going to be accused at least of fornication.

Dee Brestin: That's right. And Mary was going to have to give birth on a bare barn floor. And I believe that those three months, I believe she helped in the birth process of John the Baptist and how good of God to give her that experience through mentoring.

Dr. James Dobson: The Apostle Paul makes it clear that the more mature women are supposed to teach the younger women. That is one of the obligations within the Christian family, isn't it?

Dee Brestin: It certainly is. In Titus, we're told that the older woman should train the younger woman to love their husbands and their children. I think about when I was a young mother, I was also a brand new Christian. And this sojourn of being a godly mother was hard for me. I was just learning to walk in the light. But Shirley, who was just five years older, invited me out to her home and Shirley radiated Christ. And I can remember watching her with her children and picking up as if by osmosis how to be a godly mother. She would set boundaries for her children and keep them. Your book, *Dare to Discipline*, wasn't out yet, Dr. Dobson. But God gave me Shirley.

She would praise her children for things that she thought were important, not their physical appearance so much, but she'd praise them when they shared.

She'd praise them when they obeyed. And I remember her herding us all outside to seize a teachable moment because there were some birds flying south. And as we looked up in the sky at the V of birds, she said, "Kids, isn't our Creator wise? Jesus says He cares about every bird. And He has instigated of those birds to fly south when it gets cold. And He cares more about you. He says you have much more value to Him than those birds."

Dr. James Dobson: And you were learning all the time she...

Dee Brestin: I was learning how to be a godly mother just by being with her.

Dr. James Dobson: We began yesterday, Dee, to talk about some of the interferences with bonded friendship between women. We started talking about the mobility of our culture, where families move so often and tear up friendships. Let's talk about some of the others. What about betrayal? You talk about betrayal in this book.

Dee Brestin: Yes. There was a study in Psychology Today of 80,000 women and found the most frequent reason for friendships ending is because of the feeling that they have been betrayed. I feel the Lord taught me something when I was writing this book. I don't know if you've had the experience, Dr. Dobson, when you're writing something, feeling that the Lord is testing you to see if you really are living what you are writing.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. That makes me very uncomfortable.

Dee Brestin: But when I was writing the chapter on unfailing love and how I talked about how Ruth stood by Naomi's side. When Naomi failed to appreciate her, Ruth was steadfast. When Naomi was needing a lot of help, Ruth stood there and was steadfast. And when Naomi says, "I've come back empty" and hurt Ruth's feelings, Ruth is steadfast. And I said, "This is the kind of unfailing love we need to show each other." And women, a side effect of our sensitivity is that we're thin skinned and we get hurt. And I got my feelings hurt badly by two close friends when I was writing this chapter on unfailing love. And when you get your feelings hurt, you don't feel like working on the friendship. A good warm friendship is like a good warm fire. You need to keep stoking it, but you don't feel like stoking when you're hurt.

And I remember I said to Steve, my husband, "How can I write about the friendships of women when I'm losing all of mine?" And he said, "Maybe the Lord is testing you." And I felt he was right. And I felt convicted. And I felt like I needed to keep stoking the fire when I didn't feel like stoking the fire. I remember baking blueberry muffins for this friend that had hurt my feelings and sending notes and calling. And then you get hurt because they don't respond. But if you keep on and follow the model of Ruth, follow the model of Christ who kept loving us-

Dr. James Dobson: Steadfast love.

Dee Brestin: Steadfast, then there comes a time when you're glad that you gave unfailing love because you treasure that friend. Too many friendships end because we expect our friends to be perfect. We don't understand we're sinful and we have feet of clay and we are going to let one another down. And we need to be steadfast.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you think that kind of rejection is very common to women today?

Dee Brestin: Yes. Well, I think betrayal is common because we are sinful people. I betray people. I let people down. I'm not always the kind of friend I should be. It's interesting. In Proverbs, it says, "What a man desires is unfailing love." But a faithful man who can find? It's rare to find a friend who will be faithful when you hurt them.

Dr. James Dobson: You also talk about jealousy, kind of a converse of that same issue. Your two sisters were both homecoming queens. You were not a homecoming queen.

Dee Brestin: No.

Dr. James Dobson: You could have been jealous of them. In fact, maybe you were.

Dee Brestin: Yes, I was jealous. They were popular and pretty, and they dated a lot. My dad tried to make up for it. He would say to me, "You're the best water skier." Perhaps there's more of that in sibling situations where you're contesting for the parents' approval than there is in friendship. Friendship is sort of beautiful because you don't have any sibling rivalry to go back to.

Dr. James Dobson: Yet. Your sisters are your good friends today.

Dee Brestin: Yes they are. I credit that to maturing in Christ and through them loving me and coming to the point where you can accept them.

Dr. James Dobson: We have another short recording of a statement made by a woman about friendship that I think fits at this moment. We played one of those yesterday. We have two others. I don't know where we get time for both of them, but one of them just seems appropriate at this point.

Speaker 4: There was one point in my life when I really never did trust women as friends. I was always very suspicious of them. And until God finally gave me a true friend in Nancy Jane, and she is my soul sister. Even though we are now separated by many miles, we instinctively know when one another needs each other. And I remember the sweet, special times that we had together. And then when we would pray together regularly, usually at the kitchen table, holding hands and sharing with each other and with God our innermost secrets and sharing lots of tears too and usually finishing with just a comforting hug for each other.

Dr. James Dobson: Dee, I know you commented in your book on something that I want to pick up on here that distrust among women, between women, is often related to early childhood experiences where girls can be pretty catty, can be devastating to one another. You talked about that.

Dee Brestin: Yes. Well, I think of the nursery rhyme that talks about the little girl with the curl in the middle of her forehead. And when she was good, she was very, very good.

Dr. James Dobson: And when she was bad...

Dee Brestin: She was horrid. And the friendships of little girls are much closer, but they're also much crueler. I think it's because they're more territorial. There was a study by Norma Fishbach of first graders where she paired up all the first grade girls and all the first grade boys and let them play for an hour. And then she introduced a newcomer to each circle of two. The boys were much more welcoming, much more receptive. The girls were very unfriendly. They were guarding their circle of two. And little girls are more likely to be clique-ish, to have clubs where they exclude a heartbroken girl.

One fourth grade teacher who was a young teacher, a man, told me he was just amazed at how little girls could turn on each other on the playground. He said, "The fights between boys are usually over rules and fair play. And I step in and I referee and it's over." He said, "But little girls will turn on each other and yell cruel and insulting insults in the earshot of all." And just that rhyme about sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me isn't true. Little girls hurt each other. They give each other scars and they don't trust each other after that.

Dr. James Dobson: They remember it for a lifetime.

Dee Brestin: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: When I was in the sixth grade, there was one girl who managed to alienate all the other girls. And I'm still not sure why. She was attractive. She was pleasant, but somehow they all hated her. And they formed an I hate Janice Club. That wasn't her real name, but the entire sixth grade, or at least my class, was organized against this one girl.

And I remember the teacher handling it so poorly one afternoon. She just got disgusted with hearing about this hatred of Janice. And so we had an hour session in our sixth grade class where people came to the front of the class and described why they hated Janice, and Janice is sitting there. And the first girl that walked up there said, "Well, for one thing, she's too fat for me." I mean, I cannot imagine a more devastating experience for any sixth grade kid right on the verge of adolescence to go through than that young lady did. And yet that's not all that unusual. Having taught school and dealt with kids, I've seen the same thing you're talking about. And girls are more vicious than boys, at least

verbally. Boys will fight. They're more likely to intimidate each other physically. But when it comes to that kind of catty, destructive, verbal response, boys are no match for girls.

Dee Brestin: I think that's partly because girls are closer. They have more ammunition. They know how to go for the jugular. If they have more confidences, than they have more to spill. If they know about that person's inner heart and life, they know how to attack it. But I think mainly, and this gives me understanding, it's because women and little girls are guarding their circle. If we can say, "You and I are in the inside and she is on the outside," it makes us feel more secure. It's why little girls form clubs. It's why three little girls don't play well together. You need to have two little girls because otherwise there's always that threat that they'll break in. Boys are more likely to play in teams, but little girls play in twos.

And it can even happen in a women's Bible study. We're in charge of some Bible studies in Nebraska. And the thing that happens is after the women have met together for a year, they're so close. There's so much intimacy that even though they're getting too big, they don't want to divide. They just want to stay together and they don't welcome new people in because it'll make it too big. I think the key for women is to learn how to cherish their friends, but to be dependent on God.

Dr. James Dobson: Dee, most negatives have a positive. Where there's a downside, there's an upside. And we've been talking about this cattiness and backbiting between females of all ages that grows out of, as you said, of a vulnerability to one another and a need for one another and a territorial kind of thing. There is a positive side to that same thing. Having to do with the way little girls are constructed is different than boys. You addressed it in your book. Speak to it.

Dee Brestin: Well, little girls has such a strong desire for close relationships. When I was writing the book, our daughter, Sally received note in the mail from her friend, Gwen. And when I saw it, I laughed because it reminded me of notes I wrote and received. It was basically a friendship test. At the top, she said, "Check one. You have to." And she gave her four choices.

Dr. James Dobson: She said, C-H-E-K, "chek" one. I have it in front of me here. Go ahead. Describe it.

Dee Brestin: Well, she gave Sally several choices. First, "You are my very best friend," or "You are a good friend." "You like me sort of," or "You like me not at all." And at the bottom in big black letters, "Come on now, tell the truth." And I laughed and I was interested in a male reaction. I took it to our then 17 year old son, John, and Gwen's thinking was so foreign to him. He just kept reading it over and over. And when he finally grasped it, he said, "Good grief. Who cares?" Well, what we did-

Dr. James Dobson: She cared a lot, didn't she?

Dee Brestin: She cared a lot. And I think about a little girl who is the daughter of a friend of mine named Serena. We were in the process of adopting our daughter, Anne, from an orphanage in Seoul. And Serena knew it. And every night for three months before Anne came, she prayed for Anne's adjustment, and she was so eager to meet Anne when Anne got here. And Anne was anything but friendly. She'd been hurt by her past. She was withdrawn. Serena was blonde and pigtailed and bubbly and Anne was somber and dark.

Dr. James Dobson: Didn't speak English.

Dee Brestin: Didn't speak English either. No. And Serena came with a Teddy bear to give to Anne, and she handed it to Anne and Anne took it and she threw it to the floor. And Serena tried to take Anne's hand and said, "Anne, let's go swing." And Anne jerked her hand away. And Serena said to Anne, "Anne, I just want to be your friend." Anne didn't understand English, and she scowled at Serena. And Dr. Dobson, I don't think I will ever forget. Serena turned to me, and she said, "I don't care how long it takes. I'm just going to keep on being nice to Anne. And one day we're going to be really good friends." And they are.

Dr. James Dobson: What maturity.

Dee Brestin: And I know, Dr. Dobson, that there is a woman listening who is lonely and longing for a friend. If she would take Serena's plan to heart, to pray, and then to reach out to a friend whom God leads her, and if she doesn't respond, keep being nice to her.

Dr. James Dobson: I wish all men could listen to these two broadcasts to understand the differences, understand the need for intimacy that a woman has, that the men may not fully comprehend. Now there are exceptions, but the truth of matter is, men need to comprehend this because in early marriage, the time that you just referred to, one of the greatest dangers to a relationship is for the husband to be trying to get through school or trying to get started in business or to be involved in something that absolutely absorbs him. And it may require them to move. You go to Dallas to go to seminary, or you move to the West Coast to go to graduate school or whatever it happens to be. And the wife may have a little baby by then. And so he is totally involved and totally wrapped up in what he's doing. And she's cut off from all friendships.

Dee, you mentioned waiting for your husband to come home to meet your needs. That won't work. A man can't work 18 hours a day trying to go to school and trying to build a house perhaps or clean up a house and trying to earn a living, all the things that we try to do in early marriage, and also meet this need for intimacy. And in that kind of situation, the marriage is at great risk. And yet it is so typical. I see young people starting off marital life making that mistake. You have to make provisions to meet the wife's emotional needs somehow, not only through the relationship between a husband and wife, but through these friendships. And it is vital to the survival of marriage.

Dee Brestin: I think especially if a man has been raised in a home without sisters, this may really puzzle him. One man said to his wife, "You're the only friend I need. Why do you need other friends?" And it's because women have this gift for intimacy. Both men and women need women. And if men could realize that she will be a better wife and a better mother if she has some of her needs met through other women friends.

Dr. James Dobson: I love the title of your first chapter. It says "From Girlhood On, Gifted for Intimacy." And not a need for intimacy. It's a gift, isn't it?

Dee Brestin: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: That's what makes a woman a woman. And thank goodness women are different from men. How boring it would be if we were all alike.

Dee Brestin: That's right. And we need to accept that we need each other as women.

Dr. James Dobson: Dee, I would love for you to talk, if we had a little more time, maybe you can take a brief run at it, about women getting together and talking about the negative things in their marriages. That need for intimacy and bonding and openness may lead them to disclose things that ought to be confidential. What do you recommend there? There's cross purposes there. She needs to ventilate, but her husband needs her loyalty too.

Dee Brestin: That's right. Our priority has to be our husband and then our friend, and to be loyal and respect him. I think Mary and Elizabeth give us a good model. Both of their husbands, or in Mary's case, fiancé, had trouble believing God, and they could have gotten together and talked about how unspiritual men are and how slow they are to believe. But there's not one negative word about either Zachariah or Joseph. All that Elizabeth says to Mary is, "Good for you, Mary. You believed God." There's a building up. And if we have it in our mind that we, in order to be a true friend, we're going to encourage our friend in her marriage, We help her to think well of her husband. We are careful not to take too much time. We help her to think the best of her husband. In Corinthians, it says, "Love thinks the best." We help her to see his strong points.

Dr. James Dobson: But doesn't a real friendship, where you can be open, imply that you can say what's really on your heart?

Dee Brestin: Yes. And I think we should be able to do that. But then in response, we need to help her accept him as he is and just say, "Well, that's the way he is" and help her to think positively. But we do need to be empathetic and to be able to confide in one another.

Dr. James Dobson: I think the book, *The Friendships of Women*, will be a book that will be very, very helpful to many of our listeners. And of course, we're going to make it available

again today. Dee, as you continue to write, I hope you'll stay in touch with us. I like what you do and the way you think.

Dee Brestin: Thank you. I wouldn't have missed it.

Roger Marsh: Well just as Ruth remained steadfast by Naomi's side through heartache, emptiness and loss, today's conversation here on Family Talk reminds us that true friendship isn't about having "perfect relationships," it's actually more about choosing to love faithfully even when it's difficult to do so. You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and a conversation Dr. Dobson had with his special guest, Dee Brestin about the transforming power of godly friendships. Now if you missed any portion of today's broadcast or you'd like to circle back around and listen to part one of this discussion, go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. There you'll find the complete program along with information about Dee's book called *The Friendships of Women*. Again go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk or you'll find all this information on the Family Talk app.

And speaking of apps, if you're looking for daily inspiration to strengthen your relationships, remember the free reading plans from Dr. James Dobson that are now available on the Bible app by YouVersion. Whether you're waiting in the carpool line or taking a quiet moment before bedtime, these brief devotionals offer practical wisdom for your family journey. Now we have assembled some of Dr. Dobson's most practical devotionals for bringing biblical wisdom right to your smartphone. Perfect for those quiet moments when you need a little bit of encouragement or perhaps some extra guidance. Simply open the Bible app and search for Dr. James Dobson on your mobile device and you'll get started. It's easy to do and I highly recommend you do so even today.

Here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we believe that strong authentic relationships are key to healthy families and healthy communities. These daily broadcasts are made possible through friends like you who share that vision. Just as today's conversation highlighted the importance of reaching out in friendship, your support helps us extend a hand of hope and biblical truth to families all over America. Your generosity enables us to continue to share messages of encouragement with those who need it most from young mothers to empty nesters, and growing families to grandparents. To make a secure donation online, go to drjamesdobson.org or if you'd like to make a donation over the phone call 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Dr. Dobson reads each piece of mail that comes our way so make sure you have our ministry mailing address handy. That's Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk P.O. Box 39000 Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code, 80949. Well I'm Roger Marsh, and on behalf of Dr. Dobson and all of us here at Family Talk, thanks so much for listening 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.