



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Transform Iran – Part 2

Guest(s): Lana Silk

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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 to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, the executive producer of the Family Talk broadcast. I'm also the vice president of content here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. And when it comes to content, today's program is right up there with the top of the list of things that are very important to us in terms of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ through this broadcast ministry.

Today we are continuing my conversation with Lana Silk. Lana is the President and CEO of Transform Iran Ministries. This ministry was born the very day the Islamic Revolution began and has spent more than three decades strengthening the underground church in a nation where owning a Bible can literally cost you your freedom. Now, on the last edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, Lana Silk helped us understand the difference between nominal religion and true, costly faith, the kind that holds fast no matter the price. On today's Family Talk broadcast, she'll take us deeper into the remarkable story unfolding right now all across Iran. In the middle of a war, and in surveillance and uncertainty, hundreds of thousands of Iranians are turning to Jesus Christ. And Lana is convinced that God is on the move in ways that we here in the United States can hardly imagine. So let's rejoin this conversation with Lana Silk right here on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Well, welcome back to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. Continuing conversation, as we get into part two of my discussion with Lana Silk, who is the President and CEO of Transform Iran Ministries. Lana, it's good to have you back on the broadcast today.

Lana Silk: Thank you, Roger.

Roger Marsh: Transform Iran has been helping hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people come to faith in Christ. How are you doing so, Lana? I mean, I realize there's no simple formula, but your track record has been very, very successful over the years.

Lana Silk: Well, really, it's about considering the barriers to the gospel and making sure that we've overcome them. So a lot of that just comes to access. We use all sorts of digital media, satellite TV, radio, social media apps. We're using AI right now. We've developed an AI tool called Kairos; K-A-I-R-O-S. Viewers can check it out. It's available in 256 languages. It's kairoschat.ai. And it's these kinds of different tools that mean that Muslims in Iran who want to know about Jesus, but are either afraid to pick up a phone and call someone or don't want to be tracked on their online activities or don't know anyone that they could have a conversation with, could go into whichever zone they're more comfortable with and just explore and learn. And our different tools constantly invite people to then make that personal connection with our team. They can call in or send an email and have a conversation with us. They can join digital church networks. And it's a bit of a funnel, really, Roger, in just catching people wherever they feel safest. So often radio or satellite TV and AI feel the safest for people because they feel impersonal. And then as they start to dip their toes further in and learn more and have more questions, it just brings them in closer and closer to a digital church community, and then maybe a prayer room that meets in Zoom midweek, and then maybe make a phone call until they're ready to really make that personal connection.

Often, their human Christian community comes out of their own witness.

Roger Marsh: Interesting.

Lana Silk: We do send people to our missions trips, and we do engage in outreach in Iran, but of course we have to be very, very careful. But the reason the church is exploding in growth is because your everyday people are coming to know Jesus, finding that it's completely transformed their lives, and then bursting with it to their family and friends and communities, sometimes a great cost to them, but also very often great openness and people wanted to know what this gospel is that's changed their lives and churches are being born out of those interactions.

Roger Marsh: I'm so glad you shared that, Lana, because when I think of people who would say, okay, well, is it really "going to church" if you're doing this online? We look at that here in the United States where people don't have to worry about getting their head blown off if they go somewhere. They don't have to worry about a threat of a bombing or something like that. And I don't mean to be overdramatic, overly dramatic, and if that's not accurate, please correct it. But the idea that even with the AI platforms, which I think is just so brilliant, but when I was younger, I remember thinking, how in the world is God going to get the gospel into every language, into every tongue, to every tribe, every nation? It just doesn't physically seem possible. And now with technology, you're seeing tremendous results, which is just... It's got to be so gratifying for you. Was there any internal resistance to moving in this direction, or was this just the Holy Spirit saying, this is the next step, this is the next step?

Lana Silk: I think that because of the pioneering spirit that my parents have and how that has reproduced across the culture of Transform Iran, there's been a lot of

appetite in our ministry to embrace the new and the exciting and the thing that will most quickly accelerate what God is doing. But even then, we get surprised with how quickly these things get traction and grow. I mean, Kairos was only really released a few months ago. Within a couple of weeks, we had 130 downloads of the app. It's used all over the world. Open Doors puts out its watch list, the 10 or 30 most persecuted nations in the world. 27 of those countries now use Kairos.

Roger Marsh: Wow.

Lana Silk: Somalia, Korea, China, Sudan, all over the world in their own languages, able to have conversations, explore what Jesus' teachings were without the feeling of judgment. Some of these cultures have the culture of honor and shame, and they don't want to feel that they're exposing shameful things in their hearts to other people. When they're comfortable having a conversation with a robot. So that opens all sorts of new doors. And we're seeing some wonderful testimonies come through from those kinds of activities.

Roger Marsh: Let's get into an area that is maybe a sensitive subject for a lot of people. Because when you think about a country that has been historically a Muslim theocracy and the role that people or the roles that people do or don't have, we see a lot of images here in the West, especially of women and children being treated just inhumanely. I'll leave it at that. I won't get into more graphic of description. How do you minister to them? I would imagine it's got to be a revelation where they're reading passages like Jesus saying, let little children come to me, you know, and seeing the women as well as the men being ministered to. That's got to be just a real transformation in process. And do you have specific resources available through Transform Iran to help them?

Lana Silk: We do, yes. Jesus really did dignify women in a culture where their voice didn't matter, their testimony didn't matter, and their contribution wasn't worthy in the same way that men's contributions were. And it's such a joy for us to be able to bring that example to Iranian women and to say, this is what your Creator really thinks of you. Bear in mind, we're talking about a culture that systematically has degraded and downgraded women for decades now. And women have really bought into the lie that they are worth less. And even many women who've come to know Jesus, you know, that's something that is ingrained in their thinking.

I remember one of our conferences, our sort of training events happening somewhere in the Middle East, and we were talking about, it was a women's event. We're talking about women making a difference back in Iran. And what could they do? You know, when and if they get to go back, what would they do to make a difference? And there was a woman there who was very, very smart, academically very intellectual, who had just assumed there was no sort of high-level contribution that she would be able to make as a woman. And she was talking about learning, you know, the typical trades that you would associate with women in that culture. You know, maybe she could be a beautician or a

hairdresser and not knocking any of those trades. If God is calling you to that, then that is wonderful. But she seemed to have just assumed that that was where God was taking her. And it was so wonderful to watch the leader say to her, but you are so gifted in this and this and this. Have you considered that one day you might be the next minister of education in Iran? And just this woman, just really rethinking her future. Wow, I could have that kind of impact on my country.

Roger Marsh: Beautiful.

Lana Silk: So there's lots of stories like that. So we have a ministry called Pearl of Persia that is really designed to deal with the issues of trauma and abuse and addiction and help people overcome these hurdles, but then also relearn identity and what God says about them and find their place in the kingdom.

Roger Marsh: You know, there's a practical side of what we're talking about here, too. Obviously, the spiritual work is phenomenal, and I just get so encouraged, Lana, as you share these stories of the different outreaches that Transform Iran has and the ways that we as Americans can take a look at what you all are doing and support it, pray for it, whether it be tangible support or not. There is a part, and we see this, it's an ongoing battle here in the United States where there's a movement to try to secure the borders, if you will. to try to keep immigration legal and safe and productive. And, you know, in all honesty, the vast majority of people who do come to immigrate into the United States, I mean, they do so legally and there's not a problem, but the media dramatizes the poor and despondent, and all we ever hear is they're just here seeking asylum. They're looking for help. Well, and some of those cases are legitimate. Some of those aren't. I'm sure you encounter a lot of people who are saying, okay, this underground church thing, I'm a Christian now. I've got to get out of here. God's leading me to a different place, and I've got to find asylum, and it takes resources. What kind of support are you able to provide? What kind of counsel? Is there a financial component along with that? That's a hugely loaded question, but take a moment or two here to kind of unpack that for us, if you will.

Lana Silk: It's a really, really tough road for people who want to legitimately escape that kind of persecution and come to Western countries. We have Iranian Christian refugees in Turkey who've been stuck in that system waiting for a sort of NATO path for decades, you know, ending up raising their children in limbo, not knowing where they'll end up, not knowing which languages to learn. It's been a very, very tough road. And I know that Iranians are not the only nationalities that get caught up in that. So we absolutely can't sort of generalize any of these topics. I know that. That's not what you were doing. It's so nuanced and there's so many layers to it. It is true to say there are people with real needs that we have a responsibility for in the West to get behind and serve and love and financially support. In a lot of these asylum cases, you need finances. And we certainly aren't in a position to be bankrolling those things we would never be able to do adequately. You know, you're talking about \$10,000 to \$30,000 per

person that you have to be able to prove that you have some kind of financial stability for the government to be willing to consider your case. So it's so messy.

But then at the same time, you have people with evil intent, governments like Iran, who abuse these systems and use them to infiltrate their networks and their agents into Western countries to do their bidding. Sometimes it's like a sleeper cell for years and years and years before they're activated. So I can see the tension and I can see the arguments on both sides. And there's no perfect answer to this. Without that supernatural wisdom to know who the people are who are worthy of our health and who the people are who are actually up to no good and we need to be careful of. I don't know if there's any perfect solution to this.

Roger Marsh:

Yeah, there isn't. And yet I think God is working out His perfect will in the searching, in the hunting, in the pecking, if you will, just digging for those answers. And we're grateful that there's a ministry like Transform Iran that is actually working in that area. I would imagine too, Lana, this is just kind of more of on a personal level, that once someone who has grown up in this horrible regime and they've been brutalized, you know, whether emotionally or financially, physically, however it is. Once they come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, there's a part where they realize, wow, I've seen some stuff, as the kids might say. What kind of trauma counseling do you make available or do you point people in the right direction for because I can imagine some of it must be really severe.

Lana Silk:

Well, we're actually working on an iteration of our response to this need right now because the scale of need is so great that we just can't possibly train enough counselors to meet it properly. We do have a trained trauma counselor and she has offered training and provided training, I should say, to our follow-up team and our pastors who, to a lesser degree, can provide some kind of help to people who come through with those needs. But, you know, you're talking about in best case, hundreds of people a year that we'd be able to help in that kind of intensity with that sort of help that they need. So our response to that has been to use AI.

So Kairos has been a phenomenal success in discipleship and evangelism. We have managed to, by God's grace, overcome some very significant AI issues in terms of avoiding hallucinations, ensuring it quotes Scripture accurately, ensuring it can't be manipulated or coerced to condone sin. And, you know, once we saw that our barriers were working and it really was an effective sort of middle step for people from that human connection to just completely out in the water, then we thought, how can we develop it to offer counseling as well? And we are teaming it together with some very carefully curated and created scripted videos that we've just finished recording. The website is in production. So really, this is just sort of early stages. But in the next few months, we'll be looking at launching a website where people can go and have a dialogue with this iteration of Kairos, get help, watch the right videos, do the right activations, and have space to process these things in the interim while they're waiting to

actually speak to a person. Because we're anticipating tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, will immediately need that kind of help, and we can't keep up with it.

Roger Marsh: Lana, at the beginning of our conversation, we were having a conversation about discussing what the leadership looks like and how, for many on the Western side of the equation, when we see headlines of war and destruction and bombs being blown up and uranium stockpiles being massacred, we realize that what's happening in Iran, there's a huge revival going on, even if a lot of the church is underground, but that leadership that you mentioned earlier that was very brutal, the Islamic type of revolution and the Islamists that were running it. But now it looks like there's a leadership succession going on. I mean, a couple of the key players are no longer playing. What does that mean for the church? What does that mean for just everyday Iranians, many of whom are Christians, and your ministry to help them?

Lana Silk: I would say, if anything, the situation is worse in Iran today than it was before the war.

Roger Marsh: Interesting.

Lana Silk: The reason for that is we don't have a new regime. So that language is, I know you weren't using it, but I've heard that in the press before, that language is totally inaccurate. We still have very much the same regime. We do have new leadership. But that new leadership is younger, has more energy, is more aggressive, and more intense in the way they're just pushing through things. There's a sense of urgency, I think, that they have that their predecessors didn't. I mean, if we just even look at the way the new leadership in Iran has interacted with actions that the U.S. government have taken over the last few months, when we had similar things happen in the decades gone by, there was a sort of a patience that the Islamic Republic demonstrated. You know, for them, this was the long game. They didn't want to engage in any immediate wars. They had almost like a bigger fish to fry kind of thinking behind them.

Roger Marsh: Sure.

Lana Silk: Interestingly, the authorities that are very comfortably sending drones and missiles and whatever it takes, putting mines through the Strait of Hormuz. You know, the sort of actions that they're taking are very different and much more aggressive than the actions that their predecessors are taking. And internally, there's also a sort of gloves-off kind of approach with the people. You know, the way people are being pulled aside on streets and cars. We had one of our pastors pulled aside in her car a few weeks ago. She was told to hand over her phone. They're just spot-checking phones and going through your chat histories and what you've interacted with on social media and trying to find evidence of anti-government activity, which, of course, Christianity would be included in that. And she tried to find a way out of it. And, you know, oh, I'm sorry, was I breaking any traffic laws? Is there any reason you pulled me over? He didn't

even answer her. He just hit her so badly with the back of his pupil that he broke her jaw and her teeth. That's the kind of regime we're talking about now. You know, it's just...there is no tolerance. There's no pretense anymore. They're just running people up there, raiding people's homes and making them strip down and looking for evidence of injuries that might have occurred in the protests and then arresting them on the back of that and disappearing. You just don't hear about those people again.

Roger Marsh: Incredible. Incredible. So you have to wonder, and again, we're not having a political conversation per se, but you do have to wonder, though, how much of this move by the United States government was not anticipating that type of response. They were anticipating the old long game, and maybe that's why this is more of a prolonged situation there.

Lana Silk: Yeah, I think that's right. But I do think that God has, well, of course He's foreseen this, but I think that God is working through all of this. He is getting ready to do something spectacular in Iran. I think it was the steps that the U.S. government took and the Israelis took have unearthed a lot of things and exposed a lot of things. And in the long term, that can only be good. As Iranians, we're all just praying that they will follow through, that they won't be lulled into a, oh, okay, now we're just getting on fine and we can just patch things up and call it a ceasefire and have a deal and move on. That would be the worst for everyone, for Iranians, Europeans, Americans, that would just buy the Iranian government time and fund them as part of this deal to get themselves reorganized for another round. But I'm sure that there's a lot more going on behind the scenes that we're not aware of, you know, in Capitol Hill. And I'm sure some of these things are already being discussed.

Roger Marsh: Yeah, well, and it kind of plays in nicely with a mission statement of yours at Transform Iran where you say our hope is not destruction but restoration. We're not trying to just go, you know, who's got bigger weapons? We'll destroy you here and you destroy us there. And then let's get Israel involved. And it's just that never-ending cycle, that endless loop. And yet what you're giving us hope for is the fact that Transform Iran and other ministry organizations in Iran are leading this charge of the Iranian church and taking advantage of these opportunities where God says, look, you might have meant this for one way, but I'm going to use it for my good, which ultimately, you know, God's sovereignty means he always gets what he wants. It may not come about the way that we anticipated it.

Lana Silk is the President and CEO of Transform Iran Ministries. We have a link for transformiran.com up at drjamesdobson.org. Lana, as we wrap up our conversation here, How can we specifically pray? How can we as families, how as we as parents and grandparents, but how as we can, Americans here in the West who are watching this from a distance and maybe not getting the whole story, now that they've heard this conversation that you and I have had, how can we specifically engage in this battle for our brothers and sisters, in many

cases, new brothers and sisters, who are facing these seemingly insurmountable odds?

Lana Silk: I think the posture of our prayer is really important. You know, just remembering that we pray in authority to a loving God who hears us, who is very able to intervene at the right time and do the right thing, who is still sitting on His throne, who's not been defeated. You know, sometimes we have to remind ourselves some of these things. When we look at world events and we think, oh my goodness, everything's gone wrong, now we're in trouble. You know, we don't want to be praying out of fear or desperation or, you know, begging God to do something good. God already has good things in mind that He wants to do.

Roger Marsh: Amen.

Lana Silk: And He's inviting us to really just to partner with Him and be part of that adventure of seeing God work out His purposes. You know, I'm reminded of that scripture that says, "If my people who are called by my name would humble themselves and pray, then I will hear them and I will heal their land." And, you know, millions of Iranians have been humbling themselves and praying for their land. And I am absolutely convinced that God is on a path to healing Iran, restoring Iran, and using Iran to display His glory. And some of the things that have been happening in world events where you think, oh my goodness, I wish that leaders would do this or this instead. I think God is using all of that to ensure that no earthly government or person can take the glory for what God wants to do in Iran.

So as Christians praying, this is our starting point, understanding God's will, that He wants to establish His throne in Elam like He does, and says in Jeremiah, that He wants to display His glory, that He wants to come and heal this land, that He wants to bring righteousness and joy and peace that are fruits of His kingdom wherever the church is. And then we just pray in agreement with that, and we see that come through. And of course, we want to be practically involved. So can we pray into some of the specifics? Now, we send a prayer letter every month. You can sign up on our website, which will say very specific things like, certain people have been arrested or we're launching a new Bible translation. Pray for the people involved in that. Or, you know, we're about to do a whole new AI-led trauma ministry. Pray for the technology behind that. So really specific things that are exciting to really get to back in prayer and then see what God is doing through that. So, yeah, pray in confidence that God has good things in mind for Iran. We give a lot of guidance. In that, on our website, we talk about praying for the Iranian leaders, praying for those Damascus road conversions. We talk about praying for the church, praying for courage and strength and safety, praying for the lost who really need Jesus. You know, all of this death, all of this suffering is because Iranian people are desperately fighting for freedom and hope and a future. And the Word of God tells us that God has already gifted that to them in Jesus. So let's pray that that's what they will find, the ultimate perfect version of those things they're so desperately longing for.

And then, of course, we welcome prayer for our ministry because we're front lines and we need support in that work.

Roger Marsh: Amen. Well, thank you. And we praise God for the work that your mother and father were called to start and that you and your sisters are continuing on and everyone who supports Lana Silk and the Transform Iran Ministries. Lana, thank you so much for the work that you have done and continue to do as President and CEO of Transform Iran. We've got a link for transformiran.com up at drjamesdobson.org. Lana, thank you so much for being with us today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Lana Silk: Thank you, Roger.

Roger Marsh: Millions of Iranians are humbling themselves before God, and Lana Silk is convinced that He is on a path to heal and restore that nation for His glory. Praise the Lord. You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, and we just heard the conclusion of my conversation with Lana Silk, President and CEO of Transform Iran Ministries. If you missed the first half of our program, or if you'd like to share this broadcast with someone who needs to hear how God is moving in Iran, you'll find both parts one and two online at drjamesdobson.org or jdfi.org, if that's easier to remember. And while you're there, be sure to follow the link to Transform Iran, where you can sign up for their monthly prayer letter and stand alongside believers on the front lines.

Now, conversations like the one you just heard reach you because friends of this ministry believe families deserve a voice they can trust, one anchored in biblical truth and wisdom and always pointing to the hope found in Jesus Christ. That's the mission of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. And you know, it's hard to believe that two weeks from now, we'll be commemorating the first anniversary of Dr. Dobson entering eternity. It's been an amazing year here at our ministry and our goal to preserve and strengthen the family, to defend the sanctity of every human life and religious freedom, and to introduce as many people as possible to the gospel. Those are the heartbeats of Dr. Dobson's ministry while he was with us. And we continue to carry out that mission and your help makes that possible. So today I invite you to join us, partner with the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, continue Dr. Dobson's legacy, share a gift of any amount, and help us keep carrying bold biblical truth to families at home and to those overseas who are risking everything to follow Jesus Christ. Your support reaches further than you may ever know. And if you'd like to send your donation through the U.S. Postal Service, we'd love to receive it. You can address your envelope to the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code 80949. If you prefer to handle the transaction over the phone, you can reach a member of our constituent care team when you call 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Or to give a gift online, you can visit our secure website that addresses drjamesdobson.org. But if it's easier, you can just type in jdfi.org. It'll take you straight there.

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 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.

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