



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: God Makes Lemonade – Part 1

Guest(s): Don and Brenda Jacobson

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- Dr. James Dobson: Welcome, everyone, to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute, supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.
- Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. You know, life has a way of handing us lemons sometimes, right? Circumstances that we never chose and oftentimes we can't control. So what do we do when the sour moments come? Well, on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, Dr. Dobson sits down with author and longtime friend Don Jacobson and his wife Brenda to talk about Don's book, *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 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. Well, we're so glad to have you all here. 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 we believe so.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, why don't you start by putting your spin on what that means to have lemons come into your life and have God then do a miracle and turn them into lemonade.

Don Jacobson: Yeah. Well, the verse you gave, 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. And, you know, when your mom said to you, I don't know if she called you Dr. Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: Are you kidding me? I won't tell you all the things she called me.

Don Jacobson: So when she said, "Jim, Jimmy, make lemonade out of lemons," that was your effort. And what these stories are about is stories where people have no control. It's like Joseph. I mean, his brothers throw him into a pit. He's sold into slavery. And yet God does something that he has nothing to do with because God's with him the whole time. And so these stories are for people in the middle of pain, in the middle of discouragement. And that's not when we need to hear people say, hey, it's just hard to hear that from people that it's going to be okay. But you give them a story, you tell them a story, and they get to see God's faithfulness over and over again. It provides encouragement for that person in that time.

Dr. James Dobson: Going back to that scripture again, John 16:33, Jesus was talking to His disciples. It's right before He was crucified. And He spoke these words, and He did not say, in this world you might have tribulation.

Don Jacobson: Guaranteed it.

Dr. James Dobson: I mean, He said it is a certainty. And most of the men that He was talking to on that occasion were executed. So He was serious. He was saying, don't think this is an easy life. It's going to be difficult, but be of good cheer, I have overcome it all. And that means you can overcome as well.

Don Jacobson: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: And even with the concept you just described about the fact that God can turn lemons into lemonade, He doesn't always.

Don Jacobson: No.

Dr. James Dobson: I think of Joni Eareckson Tada who broke her neck all those years ago. I think she was 17 at the time. She's still paralyzed. So sometimes the lemonade comes in another form than in the eradication of the tribulation.

Don Jacobson: The lemonade isn't always what we expect. I mean, I'm sure if you've read her testimony, you know her, and she would have prayed for healing at that time. But out of that, years later, She'd look back and say, oh, my goodness, look what God has done. Presidential commission for the handicapped, you know. And she looks back and say, look what God did that He never could have done through this healthy girl. He put her in that position of vulnerability and dependency. And so the lemonade was something she didn't want, didn't wish for, but definitely happened.

Dr. James Dobson: Brenda, one of the centerpiece stories in *God Makes Lemonade* was something that happened to Don early in his life. He was, I think, 24 years of age and I'm going to ask him to tell a story, but is that an example of what we're talking about here?

Brenda Jacobson: Oh, absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: Were you all married at that time?

Brenda Jacobson: We had been married for three years And had no kids yet. But it changed our lives.

Dr. James Dobson: And for the better. But we need to talk about that. Don, it had to do with an afternoon where you decided to go hunting alone.

Don Jacobson: Yeah, I did. I was in commercial construction at the time. Loved working outdoors. Loved working with my hands. with my body, and that particular day, a gunsmith had told me he'd fixed my gun, and I invited a couple guys to go with me as I went and picked up my gun, and nobody was able to come, but I didn't tell anybody I was going hunting, and I didn't tell Brenda that. I headed out into the woods and a couple different places.

Dr. James Dobson: That's not real smart, Don. Nobody knows where you are. You're carrying a shotgun.

Don Jacobson: Yeah, 12-gauge shotgun.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, and you just take off late in the day.

Don Jacobson: Yeah. I was a young guy, pretty confident in myself. And this was going to go out just for a quick moment. I grabbed my dog, Big Boy, black labrador, and we went out and we were sneaking up and I could hear the ducks quacking out there. We're sneaking up and Big Boy was being really loud. And I said, Big Boy, stay and trying to get him to be quiet. And then I did, you think the other thing was dumb. This was really dumb. Again, I've hunted all my life, grew up and, you know, doing that in our family. I reached back and whacked him on the rump with the gun with the muzzle facing towards me, and the gunsmith had fixed it wrong. And next thing I know, I'm laying five, six inches of water face down trying to figure out what had just happened. And I laid there for a moment, and I go, oh, my goodness, I shot myself. And I rolled over back on my back still laying in water and just saw my gun laying in half, knew something had gone wrong, you know. And I just said, Lord, I'm going to need some help on this one. And I started trying to shoot SOS shots, but it's kind of hard with a double-barrel shotgun that's broken in half. I started yelling. Nobody came.

Dr. James Dobson: And where did the shell hit you?

Don Jacobson: Right in the side of my stomach, about four inches above my hip bone. And one of the most amazing miracles is that not one BB came out. And both you and Ryan know what a shotgun can do. And not one BB. It's a 12-gauge, number four shot, really heavy shot. Not one BB came out. And I'll just flash forward about 30 days after I got out of the hospital, I went back in. And the doctor laid me down on my stomach. And without any anesthesia at all, just went and popped 16 BBs right out of the surface of my back. And had any of them come out, I would have likely bled to death because I was out there 11 hours before anybody found me.

Dr. James Dobson: So the shot went all the way through and lodged near your back.

Don Jacobson: Well, yeah, it kind of went everywhere. If you saw my x-rays right now, you'd see BB spread over in about a five-inch area because they just kind of went everywhere, nicking organs, intestines, and all of that.

Dr. James Dobson: I cannot believe that you didn't bleed to death because a 12-gauge shotgun with number four shot will put a hole in a wall. I mean, especially up close like that, it would be about three or four inches in diameter.

Don Jacobson: It was.

Dr. James Dobson: And you're lying there at least what you thought you were bleeding to death.

Don Jacobson: Oh, absolutely. I knew I was in trouble and I was praying, Lord, I need help. I yelled and nobody came. It was about four o'clock in November and cool night. And then I stood up. I was able to get up. But once I got up, I could not swing my leg forward. I could only rotate my foot back and forth and there was extensive nerve damage. So I got back down and started to crawl. And at that point in time, I thought I was going to die because I had this unbelievable pain in my

chest. And what we found out later was it was a BB going through my heart and depositing itself in my lungs. So if you see my x-rays right now, you see all these BBs on the right side. And then you see one sticking over here in my lung. And the amazing thing is in that moment, I prayed, Lord, it was a really quick prayer. I said, "Lord, if You're going to take me home, do it quick because it hurts." And in that moment, the pain was gone. I mean, subsided significantly. And I knew if they found me before morning, I was going to live. And that actually plays out later at the ninth day of critical condition. I'll come to that in a moment.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. Now, that was November in Oregon.

Don Jacobson: Yep.

Dr. James Dobson: And the sun goes down.

Don Jacobson: Oh, yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Very early. And it gets very cold up there.

Don Jacobson: Yeah, it does. Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: So you're out there by yourself and it's dark or getting dark.

Don Jacobson: Almost dark. I started crawling out a little further and then I was running out of gas really quick. I knew I'm bleeding to death. And so and I knew if I kept going to my car, I'd never make it. So I laid down on my side underneath the tree and Big Boy came and laid by me and just kind of held him during the night while I was waiting.

Dr. James Dobson: Kept me warm.

Don Jacobson: Yeah, kept me warm.

Dr. James Dobson: And so through the night you're lying there. Brenda, what were you doing?

Brenda Jacobson: So when he was late for dinner, we were planning on having guests for dinner that night, some close friends of ours, to watch a TV show of who shot J.R. on *Dallas*.

Don Jacobson: True story.

Brenda Jacobson: That night was it.

Dr. James Dobson: Kristin, as a matter of fact, shot J.R. Sorry. I don't know. I remember.

Brenda Jacobson: So when he didn't come home for dinner, I was really shocked, especially since he knew we were having guests over. Finally, they showed up and I said to Eric and Jerry, I said, "Don's not home." And he goes, "Don't worry about it. You

know he has bad tires. Let's just wait until after the show" because it was right at the time for the show.

Don Jacobson: I want to watch the show.

Brenda Jacobson: Exactly. We watched the show. And at about 10 o'clock, we started calling around. 10 o'clock at night. Now, this happened about 4. So he'd already laid out there for hours. And we called my brother, and he kind of mentioned that Don was wanting to go hunting that day. So we looked. I went outside, and the dog wasn't in the kennel, and we kind of said, ah. So we did some more calling around.

Anyway, by about 11:30, we'd kind of figured out for sure that he was hunting. And so we kind of divided teams up. My dad and my brother went to one place that he has hunted before, and my uncle and my cousin went to another. And because there were no cell phones, my dad said, "You stay home. Stay by the phone." And I go, "I can't stay home. I can't stay home." So he said, "Okay, then you and Eric and Jerry take Rosalind Lake and drive out where he's never hunted before." And so we headed out and I knew those roads well, however, it was really, really foggy that night. And you couldn't see 10 feet in front of you. So as we were driving down, we missed the road. We finally got back on track and went by Rosalind Lake and out of the corner of my eye, I saw this glisten, which is really strange because the lights were straight ahead. And I said, "You need to pull over and check this." So Eric pulled over, and it was Don's car. And I went and got my key, and the engine started. He had no flat tires. We just didn't know why.

Dr. James Dobson: Were you panic-stricken by this point?

Brenda Jacobson: Well, at this point, I was thinking, you know, what are the possibilities, because those are the possibilities I thought. You know, his car didn't work. So I'm going, then it started bringing foul play or people into this. So that's what we started thinking, is maybe he's being held or, you know, something like that's going on. As we were driving, when we went up to the bank, the top of the bank, And Eric yelled, "Don" loudly. And then he goes, did you hear that? And his wife and I looked at him and said, no. And he yelled again. He goes, "Did you hear that?" And he said, no. And he goes, "Get back in the car. I'm going in." So his wife and I got back in the car, and Eric started barreling through the woods.

Don Jacobson: And he heard Big Boy barking.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, that's what he was hearing.

Don Jacobson: Yeah, well, he heard, no, I was totally conscious. And you ask if I'd lost conscience. I don't know. I remember being awake a lot. I bet I went to sleep. I may have lost conscience, but I was awake in that moment. And the timing was amazing. You talk about the cool evenings. God just totally used the temperature to slow my metabolism down, which actually came out later

because it was very close to hypothermia when they finally got me. But Eric came in.

Dr. James Dobson: That reduced the bleeding.

Don Jacobson: Big time, yeah. Yeah, it slowed everything down. By the time, Eric, between my voice and the dog, Eric came in. And I know what the voice of an angel sounds like now, you know. It sounds like Eric, you know, right? But he got there. He said, "Bud, how are you doing?" I said, "Pretty good. Shot myself." And he said, "Well, I'll go get help." I said, "You know, I was able to walk early. I'd get up earlier by myself. I'll bet if you helped me, I could get up." Of course, by now, I'd lost so much blood. He helped me get up, and I just swooned. I went down. He took off running, and I just laid there, and he took off to go get some help and went back to the car.

Brenda Jacobson: So he comes back out to where we were and said, "Brenda, don't worry. Don just shot himself in the midsection." I just kinda went, you're kidding me. So we went to a neighbor and woke him up. He had told Eric that he was thirsty. So when we went to this farmhouse, he mentioned that, and this farmer brought out some homemade grape juice in this jar and was going to take it out to him.

Don Jacobson: So these guys, they called the fire department, and it's a volunteer fire department, and everybody showed up, a couple fire trucks, a couple police trucks, just a lot. But in the meantime, they came back out there, got a coat on me because I was so cold. And they brought this can of grape juice. And I'm so thirsty. I can't wait to drink it. And I don't know about you guys, but I've never met a jar that's going to keep a lid on, especially, I might add, if my friend's not just so thirsty there. But these two big guys, this farmer, and my construction worker buddy could not get the lid open. And, you know, I've been sent home from surgery for drinking a cup of coffee because you'll drown. They don't want it in there in your lungs. And I just felt like there's an old angel sitting over there just saying, not happening, boy, sorry. Yeah, I just didn't let them take the lid off. And just because with where my condition is, I would have drowned in surgery likely.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you have the energy to pray through the night?

Don Jacobson: I was praying, yeah, yeah, during the night. And hearing the geese go over and mocking me with their honks and, you know. Shouldn't have been out of your own, you know.

Dr. James Dobson: So they got you in an ambulance.

Don Jacobson: Well, actually, they couldn't for a while. What happened was they got the team out there and they tried to get IVs into me and my veins had all collapsed. And so they couldn't move me. And so they called in an ambulance company and they brought in a pair of plastic pants, put them around me, pressurized and pushed the blood back up into my vitals and finally got the IVs back in and were

able to start carrying me out. Remember, it was so foggy that night, and this is where it's really, really interesting what God did here.

Brenda Jacobson: I was sitting in the police car and listening to them keep changing the hospital location to a closer and closer hospital. Finally, they changed it to Gresham Hospital, which was five miles from there, but it was a little dinky country hospital, and he was almost dead. But they didn't think he would live the helicopter ride to get to one of the major hospitals. So we went there. But when the police officer said to me, turned around and she said, "I've never seen someone as calm as you are in a situation like this."

Dr. James Dobson: That's not really your nature, is it, Brenda? Do you typically stay calm?

Brenda Jacobson: No, not really. In fact, wounds and blood and the thought of that is something that kind of freaks me out, so it was definitely the Lord. But while I was sitting there, they were talking with the LifeFlight helicopter and saying, there is no way we're going to be able to land this helicopter, we might as well go back to home base. And they said, "Well, just keep coming. Just try. We have to try." And so they came, and about five minutes before they were going to land, the fog cleared. Totally cleared. And the moon shone and the stars shone. And the helicopter was able to land.

Don Jacobson: Yeah. And the same thing happened. They picked me up and took me away. The same exact thing happened at Gresham Hospital right before we got there. The fog just rolled out and they landed. And they were scrambling like crazy trying to get out there. And they got socked in for five hours. And pretty amazing, as I was being wheeled into the hospital, one orderly said, you're in luck. I just shot myself. I'm in luck, right? They said, "No, Dr. John Brosey is on call tonight. He's on call one weekend, every eight weekends. He's known in Portland for his ability to deal with wounds because he did his internship and a lot of his doctoring in Africa and had a lot just at a time when there was need for that." And so he was just a specialist. What I didn't know at the time is a Christian who also happened to go to our church. I had just never met him. So we went in and this was 1980, and they had to warm me up because my body was so close to hypothermia. But again, God did everything, waited until the last moment on everything just to give Himself the most glory. But they had to warm my blood up. Everything they did, they had to warm me up and finally did the surgery. And I think about 4 to 7 o'clock, and when he came out of the surgery, he went to Brenda and said some kind of sobering things.

Brenda Jacobson: Yes, the doctor walked up to me and said, "If he lives, he'll have a permanent colostomy for the rest of his life."

Don Jacobson: And he'll never walk again.

Brenda Jacobson: And he'll never walk again if he lives. Actually, his first words to me were, he's still alive, which they hadn't anticipated him living through the surgery.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. I just looked up at the clock, and we're out of time, which angers me. When I really get into a story like this, you want to hear the outcome. We're going to have to make people come back next time because we're not going to get it all said. And the essence of it is that we've got you at the hospital and you're between life and death. You have survived to this moment. You've had a great physician who it's obvious the Lord was looking out for you. Be of good cheer. But we still don't know. We know you survived because you're sitting here, but we don't know how. And so we're going to pick it up right here next time. if you can be with us again.

Don Jacobson: We'd love to.

Dr. James Dobson: All right Brenda thanks for your part in telling this story and you've got more to say to us and so we're gonna have to say goodbye to our listeners. I'm sorry folks. It just worked out that way.

Roger Marsh: Well what a place to leave off. A newlywed couple, three years in, facing news that would test anyone's faith to its limits. And we'll have to wait until next time to hear how God writes the rest of that story. You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, featuring Dr. Dobson's conversation with Don and Brenda Jacobson about Don's book called *God Makes Lemonade*. If you missed any part of today's program, or if you'd like to hear it again, you can visit drjamesdobson.org and find all the audio there, as well as information about Don Jacobson's book. Again, that's drjamesdobson.org. Here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we are committed to preserving and promoting the institution of the family and the biblical principles upon which it is based. Programs like the one you just heard today are made possible by the generosity of listeners just like you. So if today's conversation encouraged you, we invite you to partner with us with a gift of any amount. You can make that donation over the phone when you call a member of our constituent care team. That number is 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. If it's easier, you can go online through our secure website at drjamesdobson.org or if you'd like to simplify that process, just type in these initials jdifi.org. They are one in the same.

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 part two of the conversation that Dr. Dobson had with Don and Brenda Jacobson. They'll finish sharing their remarkable story of survival and hope. That's coming up right here on the next 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.