



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: When Love Ends– Part 2

Guest(s): Jackie M. Johnson

Air Date: February 4, 2025

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 welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, I'm Roger Marsh. Have you ever experienced the pain of a broken relationship? Who hasn't? That deep ache that makes you wonder if your heart will ever heal. Well today, here on Family Talk, we are continuing our conversation with author, Jackie M. Johnson, someone who understands that journey intimately and has discovered God's path to healing.

Jackie is the author of the book, *When Love Ends and the Ice Cream Carton is Empty*. As both, an accomplished writer, as well as Dr. Dobson's executive assistant here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, Jackie brings unique insight to this tender topic. She has written multiple books and regularly shares her wisdom through her blog.

Now on our last program, Jackie began sharing her personal story and the biblical principles that helped her find hope after heartbreak. On today's edition of Family Talk she'll continue that discussion with Dr. Dobson, offering practical guidance for anyone walking through the aftermath of a broken relationship. Let's join Dr. Dobson now, and his guest, author, Jackie M. Johnson, as they explore how to find healing when love ends, here on Family Talk. Doctor?

Dr. James Dobson: Jackie, you talk in your book about grieving and say that it's important to let yourself grieve. Do some people just stuff it down and deny it and think it will go away and it doesn't? What role does grieving play? When there is a breakup, there is a ripping and tearing of flesh. You feel cut in half and you sometimes find it even difficult to breathe. Talk about the grieving process.

Jackie M. Johnson: Well that's very true, Dr. Dobson. A lot of people handle their emotions by stuffing them or ignoring them and thinking the pain will just go away. But I think one of the most important lessons that I have learned from getting over a breakup is, you really do need to grieve your losses.

And I didn't know this, that grieving wasn't just for a death but it's for all sorts of losses. And grieving, it's a normal reaction to loss and pain, because with a breakup, especially a long-term relationship, you have a lot of losses. You've lost

a friend. You've lost someone you love. You've lost your hope of a future with this person. You've lost closeness, affection.

Dr. James Dobson: Self-respect sometimes.

Jackie M. Johnson: Oh, my goodness, there are so many losses. And it's been said if you don't grieve well you grieve all the time.

Dr. James Dobson: What form does that grieving take place? I told you last time that when I broke up with Shirley she cried all night. Is that proper grieving?

Jackie M. Johnson: Well that's part of it. First, you need to acknowledge that there was a loss. Because you can't just say, "Oh, well, something was there, now it's gone. A loss has happened, okay, I acknowledge it." And really the main thing is to ask for God's help, invite Him into the process. You cannot do this on your own, you need to talk to Him about your situation.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you have anybody come up to you and say, "Jackie, get over it. It's done, it's gone. You should not look to the past, look to the future"? You ever hear those kind of things?

Jackie M. Johnson: Oh, absolutely. But how do you just get over it? I remember when I was writing this book I asked a number of people, how do you get over it? And some people would say, "Well you just do. Well you just do." Well how? I'm a very practical-

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah-

Jackie M. Johnson: ... person-

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah-

Jackie M. Johnson: ... and I like to know the how's. So I think in asking God for help and inviting Him into your pain has got to be paramount. And then like you said, Dr. Dobson, let yourself be sad. Tears are cleansing, they're an emotional release. They help unblock the stuck pain and get it out of you.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, when you begin to recover, how do you go onto another relationship? Are you afraid that you'll be hurt again. I think some people don't ever want to go through that again and therefore, they wall themselves off. Have you seen that?

Jackie M. Johnson: I have, mm-hmm. But, there is what happens and then there is what you do about what happened. And the same thing could happen to you and to me, and we could handle it totally different because we have a different perspective and we handle things differently. And someone could break up and put up a wall. And somebody could break up and jump right into the next thing, we're all wired differently that way.

But in the process of grieving the loss there is a really helpful exercise you can do is to recognize what was lost and what remains. And maybe take out a notebook or a piece of paper, or your computer and say, "This is what I've lost. I've lost friendship, I've lost affection," whatever. List your losses. And then on the other column list what remains. I still have a lot to be thankful for. I still have the love of my family and friends. I have my health, I have a great big God who loves me. And I can trust God is healing me." So I think that's a helpful exercise.

Dr. James Dobson: Have you ever been to a grieving group, getting together with people who are also suffering a loss and being able to talk openly about it? You've never done that?

Jackie M. Johnson: I have never done it, but I have friends that have done that, mm-hmm.

Dr. James Dobson: I think that can be helpful because otherwise, you do bottle it up inside and you're alone with your grief.

Jackie M. Johnson: That's a very good point.

Dr. James Dobson: I think that's one of the most painful things of all, is looking ahead and saying, "I have nobody to love. Nobody loves me. Nobody will ever love me." That's the way you feel, I'm not saying that's-

Jackie M. Johnson: Right-

Dr. James Dobson: ... valid.

Jackie M. Johnson: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: But being able to express that to one another can be a helpful process.

Jackie M. Johnson: That is absolutely so true because you want to tell your story. You want to get it out of you because when it's swirling in your head, it's not being processed. When you talk about it, when you get it out, it really helps to talk with a trusted friend about it and tell your story, yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Have you ever had a friend relationship with somebody that you've broken up with after having been deeply committed to each other?

Jackie M. Johnson: You mean being friends after dating?

Dr. James Dobson: That's what I'm saying.

Jackie M. Johnson: I have friends that are able to do that. I have not been able to do that very well. But I guess it would depend on the person and I would feel like they'd have to ask for forgiveness and maybe have some "I'm sorry" kind of talks before you'd

be friends. I think time has to go by and the person who hurt you needs to be sorry.

Dr. James Dobson: That's the key, Jackie. Time is a big healer. You will heal in time, if you allow the Lord to lead and you give yourself to the grieving process. Yeah, you're never quite the same but you do get to the point that you can breathe again.

Jackie M. Johnson: Absolutely. And I think forgiveness plays a big role in that. I really struggled writing the forgiveness chapter. I think that was the hardest chapter to write because I wanted it to be right. I really wanted to help people get through this. And it's challenging, but it's possible to forgive someone that's really hurt you and to forgive yourself.

Dr. James Dobson: I mentioned yesterday that I've written a book called, *Love Must Be Tough*. It's on a similar theme about what to do when you realize it's not mutual. And all of that grieving process and the anger, and the deep feelings of rejection and everything occurs. And I'm speaking of marital love, now. When that breaks up and one partner wanted it to survive and the other partner didn't, then there is this long process that goes on. And the last chapter that I wrote is also about forgiveness.

As a matter of fact, the entire book tells you how to maintain a relationship if you can, and that often, if you do the right thing, you can continue it. But then you lose the marriage reason for another reason, the one who has been hurt and rejected no longer wants it. And so you walk the process of rebuilding a relationship and then you begin to realize just how dirty it was what was done to you. And the person changes completely and says, "I wouldn't take him back if I could." You ever been through that?

Jackie M. Johnson: No, I haven't, but I'm sure there are people out there listening that have and we're here to address that pain. One of my favorite Bible verses that I've learned in the whole forgiveness process is Colossians 3:13, "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." God has first forgiven us and He wants us to forgive others, which is not always easy but is definitely possible when we know what forgiveness is and what it's not. And I think that's where people get tripped up. Because what I hear from a lot of people is, "If I forgive him he gets off the hook."

That's not true, really. Forgiveness is not forgetting what happened or acting like everything is okay. It doesn't mean that you condone what happened or that you agree with it or like it. And you're definitely not overlooking the offense, and you're not letting the offender off the hook. Instead, so to speak, you're putting them on God's hook because we can trust Him to deal fairly. He is our advocate, He's the one who deals with it. We don't have to find justice, He ensures that justice is served.

Dr. James Dobs...: The relationship changes, too. You can forgive without wanting to bring that person back into your life-

Jackie M. Johnson: Absolutely-

Dr. James Dobson: ... again.

Jackie M. Johnson: Right. You don't have to reconcile the relationship in a dating situation. You don't have to be around that person again. The thing that I learned, too, about forgiveness is that it releases you. Because when you don't forgive someone, you're the one who is hurting. But when you do forgive and let go of the bitterness and the resentment and the anger, then you're free, you'll find freedom. Because forgiveness is the balm that heals the pain in your heart.

Dr. James Dobson: Jackie, I'd like you, at this point, to talk about various ways of reacting. And most of them are wrong. One of the ones that concerns me when I see hurting singles, particularly, it's as though they were at Los Angeles International Airport. And they're standing down there watching the planes coming in. And they've got them circling above, and life can't go on until they get their plane down. And it stifles growth, it stifles creativity.

I appreciate the fact that you sat down and wrote about this, which is a proper response, trying to reach out and help others. But have you ever seen that process of saying, "Is this the one? No, it flew on by." And your whole life is on hold. It may be that God has another plan. And it's better to let Him bring events to pass than just freeze-frame your life and feeling like, "It's over for me and there is no future for me." That's one of the wrong approaches, you agree?

Jackie M. Johnson: I do agree, because we were created for a purpose and God has good purposes for us. And I think when we're frozen in our emotional state or waiting for Mr. Right to come along we're missing it. So I think our first priority is to look at what God has for us. "What does God have for me? Why am I here? What is my purpose here?" And maybe your purpose is to be married and have children. Maybe your purpose is to be single. But whatever it is, if you trust God, He will show you what that purpose is and you can live beyond your breakup and find meaning and purpose in what God has for you.

Roger Marsh: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio home of Dr. James Dobson, America's most trusted child psychologist. I'm Roger Marsh, and however you're listening to us today, maybe on the radio, online or on an app, we appreciate you joining us. Today Dr. Dobson is talking to author, Jackie M. Johnson, about her book, *When Love Ends and the Ice Cream Carton is Empty*. Here now is the conclusion of today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: What do you think about Paul's writing, it says, "It's really better that you not marry"? I don't understand that scripture because God was graciously giving us

satisfaction for the love and the attachment that we need with another person. But he put it all in sexual terms, "If you can't be celibate and do what's right there, then it's better that you marry. But if you can do that, it's better not to marry." Do you know the Scripture?

Jackie M. Johnson: I do. I think a lot of singles don't like that Scripture.

Dr. James Dobson: Well I know that all Scripture is God breathed.

Jackie M. Johnson: Of course.

Dr. James Dobson: But we don't understand it all and I don't understand that one.

Jackie M. Johnson: No.

Dr. James Dobson: The best thing that ever happened to me was finding Shirley.

Jackie M. Johnson: Well you are blessed, that's for sure. And to the single out there who wants to get married, or who doesn't want to get married, both of those choices are valid. But I think it really comes back down to, "What does God have for me?" God has blessed you with Mrs. Shirley Dobson. And I have been single my whole life, for decades, and I wonder why. And so, I have to think, "This is God's plan for me right now. That could change tomorrow." I look at Nancy Leigh DeMoss, she got married when she was 58 years old. It could still-

Dr. James Dobson: To one of-

Jackie M. Johnson: ... happen-

Dr. James Dobson: ... my best friends, as-

Jackie M. Johnson: Right-

Dr. James Dobson: ... a matter of fact.

Jackie M. Johnson: I'm not yet 58, it could happen. So, "What does God have for me?" and follow that.

Dr. James Dobson: Are you still open?

Jackie M. Johnson: I am content and hopeful.

Dr. James Dobson: Are you demanding of God?

Jackie M. Johnson: I hope not. I hope I'm not demanding. I hope I am humble and ...

Dr. James Dobson: Do you understand what I mean by demanding? There are individuals who say, "If you don't satisfy this deep longing within me, I can't serve you."

Jackie M. Johnson: Oh, I don't think I'd want to box with God verbally. I think I've learned through the years that He's God, I'm not. He knows what He's doing. I can trust Him, and that is the way that I want to live, humbly and boldly, coming before Him in prayer. Yes, I pray for a spouse and I pray for my friends. But it hasn't happened yet so I will pray on and trust Him.

Dr. James Dobson: You told me there is a particular passage within this book that you wanted to read on the air. Tell me what it is.

Jackie M. Johnson: I do. I really want people to know that even though things might seem really sad and hard, and difficult today, you will bounce forward and things will get better. And I just want to remind you of Psalm 143:7 that, "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." And this excerpt is from my book, *When Love Ends and the Ice Cream Carton is Empty*. And it's kind of an admonishment that everything is going to be okay. And sometimes that's just what we need to hear is some words of comfort, so I'm going to read that.

"You may not believe this right now, but the day will come when you don't think about him every day. And the mention of your name doesn't pierce your heart like a verbal arrow. You can drive past your special place and it no longer has a hold on you, it's just a place. You know God loves you and He is with you, and that makes all the difference. And you come to realize that endings are a part of life and so are new beginnings. You learn that God heals brokenness and brings joy and hope, and healing.

And one day everything really will be okay. Maybe not today, but some day. And one day you look up and smile as it begins to settle in your heart that God really is in control and that He cares, that He's working all things together for the good. And in the midst of your mess, God surprises you and things begin to change. It's time to heal your broken heart, the rest of your life is waiting."

Dr. James Dobson: That's very tender to you, isn't it?

Jackie M. Johnson: Yeah, it is.

Dr. James Dobson: Jackie, I want to share something with you that you may or may not have thought, but I have, in talking about this. And it is this, life is hard no matter what road you take. It is. We're promised another life in the world to come where there are no tears, no sorrow, no sickness, no separation. But in this life there are all of those things. And eventually you have to give up everything and yield to whatever process it is that takes your life.

And getting married looks like it may be the absolute solution to every problem for a person who is not married. But I'm telling you, that road is not easy either.

Because today, people come into marriage with all kinds of baggage. Many of them were raised without a father, or maybe a mother. Many of them have gone through tremendous pain and rejection in childhood and they are never quite the same thereafter. And then there is the power struggle of the early days of marriage. That's very hard, too.

So the single life, sometimes, is easier than a bad marriage. I would rather be single than be involved in a bad marriage. And a lot of marriages are just toughing it out, just letting the Lord lead and praying. And there are also cases where we're unequally yoked. And you didn't know that until the marriage occurs. Then all of a sudden, that person doesn't share your faith, you can't pray together. And you don't have hope of eternal life together.

And there also cases of abuse, and abuse of children. Marriage can be very difficult, too. So take life as it comes, make the most of it. If the single life is what God has for you, put a smile on your face and take what wonderful gifts you've been given, as you have, and press on. And then if the Lord brings somebody into your life, then you take those steps one at a time and then make the decision to marry.

I don't know if anybody will understand what I just said. I've dealt with a lot of marriage counseling. I've dealt with a lot of people who are in a form of agony of their own for having made a mistake and they realize it, some of them, on the honeymoon.

Jackie M. Johnson: Wow.

Dr. James Dobson: So I guess what I'm trying to say is, "Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, it is well with my soul."

Jackie M. Johnson: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: The title of the book is, *When Love Ends and the Ice Cream Carton is Empty*. The ice cream carton represents those who are trying to get satisfaction from somewhere, even if it's overeating. Is that what you're-

Jackie M. Johnson: Right-

Dr. James Dobson: ... referring to?

Jackie M. Johnson: Right. So I'm saying, put down the ice cream carton, pick up your Bible, pick up this book and there is a better way to heal.

Dr. James Dobson: How can they find it?

Jackie M. Johnson: The book is available on Amazon, Barnes and Noble, wherever books are sold.

Dr. James Dobson: Moody, still?

Jackie M. Johnson: Yes, it's with Moody Publishers, mm-hmm.

Dr. James Dobson: And when did it come out?

Jackie M. Johnson: The book came out in 2010, but the principles in the book are timeless.

Dr. James Dobson: They are. And goodness, if Moody still has it in print that means there is good stuff in this book.

Jackie M. Johnson: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: Jackie, it's fun talking to you about these subjects. You got tears in your eyes a few minutes ago. This means a lot to you, doesn't it?

Jackie M. Johnson: Well, it does. I've been through a lot of breakups myself. And all of the wisdom in this book is hard won wisdom. And I just want to help and bless other people. And if I can help them find healing, then it's all worth it.

Dr. James Dobson: Are you writing now?

Jackie M. Johnson: Yes, I'm writing on The Living Single blog on the Family Talk website, and I'm thinking about ideas for my next book.

Dr. James Dobson: Thank you, Jackie, for being my guest and for all that you do to keep Shirley and my life together, and to handle all the many responsibilities that come along here. And I look forward to seeing what you're writing.

Jackie M. Johnson: Thank you, Dr. Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: Blessings to you.

Roger Marsh: Well you've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's, Family Talk, and a conversation Dr. Dobson had with author, Jackie M. Johnson, about finding healing and hope after heartbreak. Jackie's journey reminds us that while relationships may end, God's love never fails. And He can turn our deepest pain into purpose. Now if today's program touched your heart, or if you know someone walking through a difficult breakup right now, I encourage you to share this message of hope. You can find the complete broadcast at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And once you're there, you'll also find information about Jackie M. Johnson's book, *When Love Ends and the Ice Cream Carton is Empty*. Again, you'll find all of those details at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

And if you're looking for more daily encouragement and biblical wisdom, I want to encourage you to find practical resources from the Dr. James Dobson Family

Institute on the Bible app by YouVersion. We've partnered with this outstanding organization to bring you free, easy-to-use reading plans that fit your busy schedule. Whether you're on the go or sitting down with a cup of coffee, these devotionals offer trusted insights on relationships, faith and life's challenges. To get started, it's really very simple. Simply open the Bible app on your smartphone or tablet, and then search for Dr. James Dobson, you'll be glad you did.

And thanks so much for remembering that Family Talk is a listener-supported broadcast outreach. We rely on your prayers and faithful financial support. And you can make a donation online at drjamesdobson.org. You can call with your tax-deductible gift at 877-732-6825, or send your donation through the U.S. mail. Our ministry mailing address is, Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code, 80949. I'm Roger Marsh, and from 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.