



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Women and Friendships – Part 1

**Guest(s):** Dee Brestin

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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 with psychologist and best-selling author, Dr. James Dobson. I'm Roger Marsh and you know, in today's increasingly digital world, where billions connect through social media, we're facing a paradox. We are more connected to each other now than ever before online and yet at the same time, many more people are feeling more isolated and lonely than ever before. You know, despite having hundreds of "friends" at our fingertips, studies continue to show that genuine human connection is becoming increasingly rare, especially for women.

On today's edition of Family Talk, we're diving into a fascinating discussion about the unique bond of female friendships. Our special guest is Dee Brestin, author of the book, *The Friendships of Women: The Beauty and Power of God's Plan for Us*. Through her own experience and research, Dee reveals how a woman's need for deep, meaningful connection reflects God's beautiful design. Now while this conversation especially resonates with women, guys, I encourage you to stay tuned as well. You're going to gain some valuable insights on how you can help better connect with the important women in your life. Drawing from both personal stories as well as biblical wisdom, Dee Brestin explores why these relationships are so vital and how they differ from male friendships. So whether you're seeking to build stronger connections or better understand the dynamics of friendship, today's program offers practical wisdom for nurturing these essential relationships. Here now is Dr. James Dobson to introduce our guest, Dee Brestin, on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: I want to tell you; I think you have written an outstanding book here. I mean this book ought to be read by every family, certainly every woman in the family. There's just so much practical nuts and bolts kind of stuff in this book about friendship. You did a lot of research before you wrote it, didn't you?

Dee Brestin: Yes, I did. It's a topic that's important to me. My friendships with women have been important in my life. They were important in my childhood, and I think they're important to most women, very important.

Dr. James Dobson: You obviously agree with me, and I've been saying some of these things for 10 or 15 years, that friendships between women are absolutely critical to meet that need for intimacy that women feel so deeply. That's really what's behind the topic, isn't it?

Dee Brestin: Yes. I think women have a longing. There's a line from *Anne of Green Gables* where she says, "I've dreamed of meeting her all my life, a bosom friend, an intimate friend. You know, one that I can confide my inmost soul to." Women have that longing that sometimes men don't identify with.

Dr. James Dobson: And don't even understand sometimes.

Dee Brestin: Sometimes that's true.

Dr. James Dobson: When I was about 10 years old my mother read *Anne of Green Gables* to me as a kid. We would read every night before I went to bed. Even though that's a story about a girl I really enjoyed that book, and when you quoted it in *The Friendships of Women* it brought back memories to me. That is the essence of that book, isn't it, of Anne's longings, emotional longings to touch someone soul to soul?

Dee Brestin: Right. I began to write a book just about friendship, but I found that men and women are such different animals that it didn't work. It was like writing a book about bananas and cars.

Dr. James Dobson: I want to explore that thought, because some of the differences go back to birth or even prior to birth, and I want to talk about that. I'd like to go back to my first film series, back in the days of my callow youth. This is a statement that we're going to hear, about a two minute statement that I made about this topic in 1978. I related the depression that women are experiencing, or were experiencing then, to the breakdown in the relationship between women. Dee, listen carefully and then we'll talk about it.

"I need to say something to the women who are here. I've hit the men awful hard today and, boy, this is a two-sided picture and I really left it kind of lopsided. But may I say to you women that I really believe men have not changed that much in the last hundred years. You see, I really doubt if men have ever met women's emotional needs the way they'd like for them to.

I doubt seriously if the farmer came in from the field and said, "Tell me how it was with the kids today." I don't think men have ever done that the way women want them to, so what's changed? Why is depression on the increase?

It results primarily from the breakdown in the relationship between women. You think that over after you leave here. See, a hundred years ago women cooked together and they canned together and they washed clothes together and they had babies together. When a baby was born, all the women came in

and they showed her how to put on diapers and how to take care of the child. They had remedies for everything. They taught her how to discipline.

There was support. There were grandmothers and mothers, there were neighbors. They got together to do things. There was a sense of comradeship, a sense of love, a sense of partnership among women, and that has deteriorated. It is gone. The women that live on this side of me in our city and community have never been in the home of women that live on this side of us, and neither one of them know the lady across the street very well.

There is a breakdown in the relationship between women. We're a moving society, a mobile society. People move into a neighborhood, they're only there two or three years, they don't get acquainted. They go to church, but there's such a kind of a phony, unreal mask that we put on, all our nice clothes, and we sit and we smile. We never let anybody know we're dying inside, and people don't meet each other's needs.

I believe that one of the answers to depression is for women to get into each other's worlds. Meet together for support groups, not just Bible studies, although it explains why Bible studies are on the increase like they are. People want to know the Word, but they want the Word to meet their needs. But meet together to care for one another. Pray for one another. When someone is hurting reach out to them, and I think the depression would decrease instead."

Dee, does that provide the basis for what you were building on in this book, *The Friendships of Women*?

Dee Brestin:

Yes. I think it's a very important part of what I'm talking about. One thing that I think women have done is that they have assumed that their husbands will be able to meet the same kind of needs that their friends did growing up, and they're sort of shocked. Ladd Wheeler, who's a professor of psychology at the University of Rochester, said that both men and women need women because they're less lonely when they spend time with women.

I firmly believe women have a gift for intimacy, for empathizing, and sometimes they demand that their husband be what their women friends are, and they're not made up that way. Women say three times as many words as men a day, so when women say their husbands don't talk to them it maybe is true.

Women will give you empathy. If you have a problem, I think if you want a one, two, three solution it's good to go to a man, but if you want empathy, it's good to go to a woman. I can remember last February when I faced a crisis, my dad was going to have triple bypass surgery and I planned to come out and be with him because he's 74 and I didn't know if I would see him again on this Earth. No sooner had I made the airplane reservation... I just put the phone back on the receiver and the phone rang again.

It was our case worker with whom we were working to adopt a five year old girl from an orphanage in Seoul, and she told me that our daughter would be arriving the same day that my dad was going to have surgery and she would be arriving in Des Moines. I hung up the phone and I cried because I felt like I had to be both places.

I had a series of errands to do, because I knew I was going somewhere, and I kept running into women friends. We live in a small town. I ran in the library and the grocery store, I had to drop some things off, and each one of those women, without my saying anything, intuitively knew that I was under stress and they began to draw me out with caring questions, asking me what was wrong, and when I began to cry, they began to cry.

Men couldn't get away with this, but I remember one scene, we were standing in front of the broccoli and lettuce at Safeway crying and she was hugging me and praying for my dad, that I would know what to do. That next week every day in the mailbox I received a caring note from a different woman friend letting me know she was praying for me, that she cared about me.

I think women give the kind of comfort we need in this difficult sojourn in life, and if we isolate ourselves and say our husbands can do it all we're going to be depressed and lonely, and we have a derogatory effect on our marriage by continually demanding that he be-

Dr. James Dobson: All things.

Dee Brestin: Right, all things. That reminds me of a quote that Jane Kettering. She says, "Just as the hand needs the eye, it also needs the other hand." We need each other as women. Women can uniquely sympathize with another woman's circumstances.

I can remember a male doctor leaning over me when I was in labor and saying, "Ah, come on, it doesn't hurt that much," and I just thought-

Dr. James Dobson: How would he know?

Dee Brestin: ... oh, I wish you had been here.

Dr. James Dobson: In that instance that you described, your women friends picked you up and carried you through a very difficult time.

Dee Brestin: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Dee, is it your observation that many women come into marriage expecting all of their needs for intimacy to be met in that marital relationship and are typically disappointed when that does not occur?

Dee Brestin: Yes. I think that's very common. I've heard that in my interviews. I think the scriptural example we have of that is Naomi. She expected that all her needs would be met through her husband and her sons, and when they died she was devastated and bitter and angry at God, and I believe God wanted to minister to her at that time through her two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, but all she could think was "I need my husband back." She wouldn't let them... She tried to send them back to Moab. She succeeds with Orpah, but Ruth will not allow her to send her back.

Ruth's name, interestingly, means a woman friend, and I think she shows us the height of which we're capable, because she faces Naomi squarely and she says those words that people think were said in wedding ceremonies, but were said by one woman friend to another. She says, "Entreat me not to leave thee or to return from following after thee, for whither thou goest I will go and where thou lodgest..." and she stands there and she what? She restored Naomi eventually.

But I think we can get hung up, and it's so dangerous. Not only do we smother our husbands, but it's not realistic. Widows outnumber widowers five to one.

Dr. James Dobson: You described very thoroughly in your book, Dee, some of the very early differences between males and females that have been identified by research. Who don't you go through some of those?

Dee Brestin: Okay. The Swiss physician, Paul Tournier, says that women have what he calls a sense of the person. Studies have shown that girl infants recognize faces long before boy infants. Boy infants are fascinated by objects.

Dr. James Dobson: Mobiles and things of that type?

Dee Brestin: Yeah. Our sons had a mobile when they were babies and I remember them watching those yellow ducks and the blue trains bobbing up and down and their little arms and legs would flail in excitement, and for hours they would watch that. We brought that mobile out when Sally was born. It just didn't hold her. She was scooting to the side of her crib and holding her arms up. She wanted to be with me.

Preschool girls tend to draw faces when you give them a piece of paper. Preschool boys draw objects. I believe it's a lot more than culture that little girls are obsessed with dolls and little boys are obsessed with zooming cars around.

One study that I thought was really interesting from Harvard found that little girls are more likely to cry as if in empathy when another infant is crying. It makes sense to me that the same God that created me to carry babies in my womb and nurse them at my breast would equip me with some special nurturing skills. We've surely seen that in our daughters.

I can remember I went away for a retreat one weekend and when I came back Sally said to me, "Daddy just doesn't know how to wake me up. He doesn't turn on the music. He doesn't rub my back."

Dr. James Dobson: He just says, "It's 6:30. Get up."

Dee Brestin: That's right. It's just... I think it's a gift from God, I really do, although I think culture has an impact.

Dr. James Dobson: You also quoted the Family Circle study of 15,000 women. I think that fits here.

Dee Brestin: Okay. 69% of them said they would rather talk to their best friend when they're feeling unhappy than to their spouses. I think that's because women tend to empathize, and often when you're feeling unhappy you don't want "this is what you should do," although I taught Steve early on in our marriage that I didn't want a solution. I didn't want him to fix it. I remember I ironed a hole in my best blouse and I brought it to him. I was looking-

Dr. James Dobson: We're talking depression here.

Dee Brestin: I was looking for sympathy and he said, "What you need to do is look more carefully at the label." I said, "Honey, that's not what I need. I need you to take me in your arms and say, 'Poor Dee-Dee,'" and he's been doing that, I think. But women will empathize. Sometimes it can get you in trouble as women. Sometimes women empathize when they shouldn't: they'll empathize with sin. They'll say "you are a good mother" when they know she's not. But basically I think that's why women will go to women when they're feeling unhappy.

Dr. James Dobson: You have described the things that interfere with the relationships between women. Again, Dee, I think you've said it very well in your book. You talk about distance as an interference. Let's move through some of those things that keep women from being intimate with one another and getting the kind of satisfaction that they need from the friendship.

Obviously I made reference in the tape that we just heard to the fact that we move frequently in this culture and in this society. That obviously tears up friendships faster than anything, doesn't it?

Dee Brestin: It surely does, and it's one of the reasons women hate to move and are not as willing to move as men are. We have moved eight times to seven different states in our marriage, and I can remember the loneliness. The first couple of times that we moved I expected a neighbor to come over with a steaming casserole or for people to realize we were new at church and invite us home for dinner. That's what Emily Post says you're supposed to do. The new people are the ones that are supposed to be invited. But it didn't happen and I-

Dr. James Dobson: You're talking eight moves now?

Dee Brestin: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: It did not happen in any-

Dee Brestin: Well, I got smarter after about the third move and I realized that even though I was the new one, I had to take the initiative. I had to be the one to reach out and to take some-

Dr. James Dobson: What a sad commentary, Dee. You move into a new church and the church, which is based on love and caring for one another, does not typically reach out?

Dee Brestin: I think it's because we're so mobile, people don't even know who's new, and if they are new they think "how long will they be here?" I think it happens in smaller churches, and it does happen, but it doesn't happen the way it did a generation ago, when a new person was an event.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's talk about that then, Dee. How can a woman be a good friend? What are women looking for in friendships? Let's suppose we're talking right now to a woman who moved two years ago and she still has not formed a new network of friends and she doesn't know how to attract other women to her, she doesn't know how to establish those friendships. How should she respond in such a way that will draw them to her?

Dee Brestin: I think she should look for ways to meet their needs. It's a little like a courtship, where you woo somebody and you listen to them and you hear between the sentences what their needs are. You offer to babysit. You show them that they are a special person. You draw them out in conversation. I think that's something that women are good at if they just can overcome their fears.

Women do know how to volley in conversation. One woman said, "Sometimes talking to a man is like playing tennis with no one in the other court." But women do know how to volley. It's a gift we have if we'll just use it. When you draw someone out in conversation and ask them caring questions about their life, they're going to love you because they feel like you really care about them, and you've got to care about them.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you agree with the conclusion that I drew on the film series that there is a breakdown in the relationship between women?

Dee Brestin: Yes. I think it was built into our lives where they farmed together and quilted together, and it isn't built into our lives. We're isolated in our homes and we're caring for children. I can remember when our boys were little the day seemed so long and I just watched the clock and waited for Steve to come home. Finally I did go out and join a young mothers' Bible study, and I can remember when I got there I was so lonely.

We had moved to Seattle and Steve was doing his internship and he was gone a lot, and I just felt like I needed an adult to talk to. When I got there I was very inhibited and quiet, and I was quiet during the whole Bible study. At the end of the Bible study the woman who was leading it said, "Can we go around and get prayer requests," and they came to me and I couldn't even talk. All I did was cry, and I was so embarrassed that I was crying in front of these strangers.

The women started coming up and putting their arms around me and praying for me. It just took a moment, but it meant so much, and I realized that was what I needed. I needed women friends.

I've literally gotten on my knees and said, "Lord, open my eyes to a woman who can be a good friend to me," and on that very day I would meet someone. I think that's a good prayer to pray, because God will open your eyes to someone who you may not in your preconceived way of thought you might have been a friend to, someone who might not be just exactly your age, or someone who is hurting, herself.

I would suggest to women that they get involved where godly women are. I think Bible study is a good place, but the main thing a woman needs to do, and this is hard for a woman who's low in self-esteem, is to take a risk and invite women over, make herself vulnerable and invite again. I would compare the woman who is unwilling to take risks a little to the turtle who stuck his head out during a hailstorm and really regretted it and said he would never do it again, but his life is cold and dark and lonely.

You've got to take some risks. You've got to reach out to a woman that you admire. Ask her over, and if she doesn't respond, ask her again.

Dr. James Dobson: Dee, you just made reference to low self-esteem. I don't know if you noticed it when you did it, but you pointed to yourself as you said that. You've struggled with that, haven't you?

Dee Brestin: Yes, I have.

Dr. James Dobson: Most lonely people have. We have several quotes that we want to share. One of them deals with precisely what Dee's talking about here, that lonely feeling and the importance of friendship in dealing with those feelings.

Speaker 4: When I'm lonely I wish that there was somebody that I could call and feel like I'm not bothering them, not intruding on their time, just to say, "Can I come over for some coffee," or, "Can we just sit and talk," without feeling like they need to hang up the phone because they're busy.

I'd like to be able to just tell them the problems that have gone through the day and maybe have the conversation last long enough for me to be able to say things, that I appreciate their time, and so that we can just sit and talk about



what's going on and how we feel about each other without having to stop before that point because it's getting too deep.

Dr. James Dobson: Dee, why is that kind of intimacy so difficult to find today? Why do so many people long for it and search for it and come up empty?

Dee Brestin: I think a lot of it is because we are unwilling to take risks. We're afraid if you take a risk it means you may get rejected, and that's very hard for a woman.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. By risk you mean picking up the phone and calling someone who hasn't called you, reaching out to someone who has not reached out to you and asking if they'd like to do something together, they might say no, they might really not want to be with you and you might get hurt further?

Dee Brestin: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: So the tendency is to pull in and let the four walls collapse?

Dee Brestin: Right. And even on another level, if you don't talk about anything that's really important, then they won't break your confidence or they won't think that you're foolish. But unless you take a risk, you can't get to that kind of deep level of sharing, making yourself vulnerable, talking about what's really on your heart.

Dr. James Dobson: Is it your impression that many, many women have never found the kind of friendship you're talking about, the intimate friendship?

Dee Brestin: Well, I think it's more true of men. When a friend is defined as someone that you feel close to, confide in and see often, four out of five men declare themselves to be friendless. Women are three times as likely to have a close confidant, and yet many women don't.

Dr. James Dobson: Dee, the title of your book again is *The Friendships of Women*. There's a lot more in your book that I want to talk to you about. Let's just continue next time, can we? Thank you for being our guest today.

Dee Brestin: Good. Great. Thank you.

Roger Marsh: While today's digital world promises endless connections, Dee Brestin reminds us that true friendship requires the courage to be vulnerable, to risk reaching out, to share our hearts and to create the kind of deep bonds that can carry us through life's toughest moments. You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, and we just heard the conclusion of part one of a meaningful conversation about the power of authentic friendship featuring Dr. Dobson and his guest, Dee Brestin. Dee is the author of the book, *The Friendships of Women*, and we have information for that book as well as the entire first part of this broadcast, or if you'd like to share these insights with a friend or a loved one, go to [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). Once you're 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](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk) for more information.

You know as Dee Brestin spoke about the power of reaching out to others, Family Talk is reaching out to families every day on radio and online. Multiple platforms are being accessed to bring wisdom, hope and biblical truth to millions of homes all across America and literally all over the world. Your partnership helps make these connections possible. You can give a gift online at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org), or call us at 877-732-6825. And if you're looking for daily inspiration to strengthen your relationships, I want to tell you about a wonderful free resource from the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. We've created several inspiring reading plans through the Bible app by YouVersion including topics like pursuing growth as couples and embracing the divine dimension. Each of these reading plans is carefully crafted to help you grow deeper in your walk with the Lord and with others, so why not start today? Just open the Bible app on your mobile device and search for Dr. James Dobson, then begin your first reading plan. It only takes a few minutes to get started but the impact on your relationships will last a lifetime.

Well I'm Roger Marsh, thanking you so much for listening today and inviting you back next time for part two of Dr. Dobson's conversation with Dee Brestin talking about the friendships of women. You won't want to miss her practical insights for building meaningful friendships, coming right here on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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