



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: A Legacy of Faith: The Harrison Family – Part 2

Guest(s): Frank and Jan Harrison

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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 another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh and today on the program, we're bringing you part two of a powerful story featuring Dr. James Dobson's conversation with his special guests, Frank and Jan Harrison. They'll be talking about how God can transform our deepest heartaches into something beautiful. Specifically, Frank and Jan will be sharing their son James's journey from a strong-willed child and young man to one who ministered in war-torn Sudan to eventually when he was called home to be with the Lord at the age of 27. Frank and Jan never imagined that their adventurous son, who once struggled to fit into traditional settings would become a catalyst for Open Eyes Ministry, But now today, Open Eyes ministries is operating in 18 different countries and this organization equips local pastors with motorcycles and other resources to reach remote villages with the gospel. They are mobile messengers as they refer to them. But the Harrison story isn't just about ministry. It's about trusting God through life's storms and watching Him work in unexpected ways. Their journey offers fresh hope to anyone walking through difficulty, especially parents with a prodigal child or maybe those grieving for the loss of one.

Now on our last Family Talk broadcast, Frank Harrison was sharing how he and his company, Coca-Cola Consolidated, Inc., have built a purpose-centered culture in the workplace and Jan was sharing her journey from being well-churched as she put it, to truly knowing Christ. Today let's join now as Jan picks up the conversation by talking about the importance of attending a local church.

Jan Harrison: Being part of a strong church, I just encourage younger women when I'm with them so much how important it is. As we see statistically, church membership is falling away and now you can watch online instead of go in but there's a reason the Lord said not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together. And He knew we would need to be in community. And I think we can't say enough about the importance of seeking out a strong Bible teaching church that you can worship and grow in and also be used to bless and be a part of.

Dr. James Dobson: I find that many people are looking for that, what you guys have found, and they have a hard time finding it. Some churches and some cities seem not to even have it, and that's sad.

Frank Harrison: I'm reminded of something Dr. Graham said before he died. He said, "The next revival in America will be in the workplace." Now, I hope it's in the church, but I can see why he said that with fewer and fewer, I guess, going to church. And there's just so much we can do in the workplace. And we started, Dr. Dobson, a program, it's probably 10 years old now called the T-Factor, stands for transforming your company, your culture for good, for God, and for growth. And about once a month we'll have 700 CEO types from around the world that listen in on this half-day conference. And we just share our culture and how to do business for God and just go through our giving programs, our stewardship programs, chaplaincy, and just answer all kinds of questions, have attorneys there that just answer and work with the guys on what you can do in the workplace and all these things that we share.

Just loving and serving and helping people and giving is so powerful for your business. We do it, I think, because God's called us to do it, but also everything we share in that T-Factor conference just drives the business forward. We say now even giving or generosity drives cash flow. That sounds crazy because when you give, your cash flows reduce, I guess. But we say no. But how about Proverbs 11:24-26, "The world of the generous gets larger and larger and the world of the stingy gets smaller and smaller. The one who blesses others will be abundantly blessed and those who help others will be helped." I mean, that's from Solomon, the wisest guy to ever live. But we're just slowly but surely learning some things and we've got much more to learn, but just giving and serving people in our communities.

We have, I think, 130 stewardship programs where we work with the homeless, the elderly, the orphans, the prisoners. And when you can get a reputation in a city, a town as a giver and as a server, you do it because God's called us to do it, but it is so good for your business. And that's what we try to share in these T-factor conferences.

Dr. James Dobson: That's good stuff. And many people never learn that. They don't think of giving as something that comes back to you, but it actually does. Jan, you have four kids.

Jan Harrison: I did.

Dr. James Dobson: And you're doing all this work for the Lord and how do you work it all in?

Jan Harrison: Well, they're grown now. I mean, there was a period of time I didn't work at all in... They were the work when they were small and I was able to be at home, and that was such a blessing to me. That was really all I ever wanted to do. But as they started to go off to school and get involved in things and I started to be

able to participate outside, it was a blessing. It was a blessing to them. Our children learned that God takes up on your behalf. When you do the things He's called you to do, he takes up for the things that sometimes you're afraid are going to be left out.

I wasn't always the homeroom mother or the one that showed up with cookies or brownies, but they knew that I was there when they needed me. And I love to encourage women too, that if what you can be doing has eternal value, then allow the people that have not discovered eternal things yet, let them do those jobs. They're dying to do those jobs. You show up where God can use you to make an imprint or an inroad for eternity.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's shift gears and talk about that book that I'm familiar with. You've been here before and we talked about this.

Jan Harrison: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: And it was moving to me then, I'm sure it will be today because you went through a really, really tough time. It had to do with the loss of a child. But walk us through that tragedy and what you did with it and what the Lord did with it. And Frank, I want to hear from you too.

Jan Harrison: So we had four children and we had one son and his name... He was the fourth Frank, but we called him James, by his first name. And he was just a precious full of life, full of energy, all boy little boy. He was definitely one of the ones that I don't want to say drove me, but inspired me to read *Dare to Discipline* and read how to raise boys and all of that. He brought us great joy and there were times and seasons in his life that also brought us great sorrow. The title of the book I wrote was *Life After the Storm*, but there was life before the storm, there was life during the storm, and then I wrote about life after the storm. James was-

Dr. James Dobson: Is that book still in print?

Jan Harrison: It is going to be re-released in April with a new cover and a new introduction 10 years after his death, what the journey of grief feels like. I'm not a grief counselor, I'm just someone that walked through it. And thankfully because the book was written hand-in-hand with the Word of God, it's as relevant today as it was the day it was written. And I think it's a great resource, not just for the loss of a child, but everybody has life storms and sometimes the clouds come up slowly and they fill up quickly and sometimes it all just drops. But often it's the loss, it's that period of time where you realize the prayers you prayed, the things God gave you, the wisdom that He directed, the counsel that He gave, and you continue to lay those things before the Lord over a child. James loved the Lord. He loved people. He did not love school. He liked to walk on the edge. He was a risk-taker always. And as he got older-

Dr. James Dobson: Was he your eldest?

Jan Harrison: No, he was the second. He's our only boy, and he was the second child. And he simply just did not like to do life in the box or to stay between the lines a lot of times. And that played out in some really positive ways and it also played out in some really negative ways. And school was very hard for him. He just really struggled with reading. It probably was dyslexia, though never fully diagnosed as dyslexia. The older he got, the better he did and the better he did on his own outside of school. But the school box just did not fit James, and eventually he became rebellious. And those were really, really hard years. I know now that God allows His people to go through really hard things. I know that there were so many precious things that the Lord taught us as a couple, taught us about raising children, taught us about our inadequacy. For all of the parents out there that think they're going to get it all right and pray it all into a corner and it's all going to turn out just like-

Dr. James Dobson: The second child usually teaches something to their parents that they didn't have to deal with in the first child.

Jan Harrison: Well, that was certainly true for us. So it just was so humbling. It's so humbling to not know what... To love this little person with all of your heart and to see the potential in them and believe that God has great plans for them and to pray those over them and continue to pick them up and point them in the right direction. And it's really hard to-

Dr. James Dobson: Would you call that one your strong-willed child?

Jan Harrison: Oh, he was strong-willed, but he was a kind person. He was not a militant kind of person. But yes, he was strong-willed. He was going to do it his way. Yeah, he was.

Frank Harrison: James was, I'd say first of all, as I'm listening, fearless, just not afraid of anything or anybody, full speed ahead. As a young kid growing up, I took him with me to a lot of travels. We do a little hunting and so-

Dr. James Dobson: A little hunting.

Frank Harrison: Eight, nine years old, I can see him now in British Columbia, his own horse, rifle in the scabbard, hunting stone sheep up there. Jan used to get on me a little bit about some of those trips and taking him. He wasn't quite ready, but he traveled a lot before he got to go to Africa himself. But good little athlete, people followed him. Later, high school, college, started running, just partying too much, having too big a time. Halfway through college, College of Charleston... When I go down there now, I realize there's a bar on every corner down there, but just was running way too much. And a friend of ours at Samaritan's Purse heard that he was running and he did a lot of running himself at one day and called James... Called me first and said, "Frank, I'm going to invite James to come over..."

It's 2005. "To Sudan during the middle of the Civil War over there. We could use his help over there. And I just think it'd be a great place for him to go to get out of all the situations he's in now." So I said, "Well, call James. I have no idea if he'll go or not, but call him." And James said, "I need to get out of town. I need to go." So we went to Louis, Sudan, a little town in southern part of Sudan. It was just Sudan back then, 2005.

And first night he spent all night with a man by the name of Pastor Simon, who's still with us today at the ministry, Open Eyes, that we eventually started, but spent the first night with Simon all night long and said, "Dad, I told him everything bad I'd ever done." And we kid about it being a long night, but he just... confession, recommitment time, and just fell in love with the people in the war and the pastors there and stayed. Would come back and forth several times to Charlotte over the next five years until God took him home. He almost died once from malaria. He lived with the people.

Dr. James Dobson: He had pneumonia, didn't he?

Frank Harrison: Acute pneumonia we were told, but lived with the people, ate their food, lived in their huts. James was full boy. I mean, he could go and go with anybody anywhere and tough but loved the Lord. Would die for Jesus.

Jan Harrison: I like to say that James, he saw the faith in the people who had nothing and who struggled so desperately in those small villages and under great, great poverty and war and conflict. And he saw the faith in the believers there in a way that 21 years of Sunday school and living it out did not take root in him like it did to see people who had nothing and knew nothing was going to change, but their testimony every day was, "God is good. God will take care of us. The Lord will show us. The Lord will provide." And it transformed him like nothing else, that living faith.

Dr. James Dobson: So he was on the upside of that cycle-?

Jan Harrison: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: When he got sick?

Jan Harrison: Yes. He was very much invested in the people that God had put in his life there, and I think he found real purpose in just being able to live it out in that raw way that he witnessed there.

Dr. James Dobson: How long had he been there when things started unraveling?

Frank Harrison: Well, he was in Africa from like 22 to 27. He died at 27 years of age.

Dr. James Dobson: You were proud of him too, weren't you?

Frank Harrison: Oh yeah. Yeah. Just learning to trust God even today with all that went on and all that happened. But He used him powerfully, God did, and in the early... After he'd been there the first year, he just started calling, saying, "Dad, we got to help these people." And James, by the way, just had such a heart for people, Charlotte, New York, wherever. If you drove by a homeless person, "Dad, pull over. We got to talk with these guys and see what the deal is. We got to help them." He just couldn't drive by a homeless person without getting out and checking on them and seeing what the deal was. But he just kept calling, saying, "Dad, we got to help these people." He was kind of working with Samaritan's Purse there in Africa, and he just said... These pastors over here, first of all, they walk for miles, they'll walk twenty-something miles to go to a village to share and plant a church.

And God, if they just had a motorcycle, it'd so increase their ability to reach. And so we started with just helping with motorcycles and then just... We were originally helping through Samaritan's Purse, and then... It wasn't my idea because I didn't really want to start a ministry. I just had people out of the blue saying, "Hey, Frank, you should start something around what James is doing there in Africa."

And I say 10 people, I don't know if it was 10 or not, but there was a good friend of mine named James Dobson that we were Turkey hunting with somewhere in Texas and out of the blue... Well, I shared some videos with you from James and some of the stuff that were going on in Africa. And he said, "Frank, I really think you should start a ministry around some of that stuff James is doing in Africa." And you had no idea you were the 10th guy in a row saying that. But I came back to Jan there and we were talking. I just said, "Jan, that's a smart man. Maybe we should do this." And so really, you were the final blow there that just said, "Let's start a ministry."

Dr. James Dobson: That thrilled me.

Frank Harrison: Had no idea what we were doing but the purpose of this ministry is to accelerate the gospel by coming alongside local pastors and equipping them to reach the unreached, underserved people of the world. And we're told there's 3 billion people in the world that don't know about Jesus. So we're now in 18 countries, just hard places like Sudan and Cuba and the Middle East and just unreached areas where James would've taken us. We have 2000 of these mobile messengers now. We call them the Pastors on Motorcycles. Our goal is to get to 10,000 as soon as possible. We believe, we think-

Dr. James Dobson: My goodness.

Frank Harrison: At 10,000 though over a million people should be coming to Christ every year through 10,000. And they're baptizing, planting churches, and doing all kinds of work.

Dr. James Dobson: So this guy who generally didn't play by the rules and now really started something that's still underway today.

Frank Harrison: Yes, yes. And only God could have done that. And we just-

Dr. James Dobson: So you got involved in it too? It was not just his ministry?

Frank Harrison: We say we co-founded it, but there would be no Open Eyes without James. I had nothing. I wasn't in Africa and Sudan and the civil war. So he pulled us into it and I did the paperwork and helped pull it together and hired some people. And boy, a little bit I've learned there about ministry, just like in business, you've got to have a great leadership team, and everything rises and falls in leadership. We now have a wonderful team in place there in Charlotte and throughout these 18 countries that are just doing great work. We were just down in Mexico a week ago with about eight or nine business guys from around the country, had the best time, but just so moved with these men as we were in an area outside Oaxaca.

And just wow, just the witches and the demons and the crazy stuff that was going on in some of these villages and our mobile messengers, we commissioned 30 of them, putting them on motorcycles. And what's funny about that, Dr. Dobson, a third of them don't know how to ride a motorcycle. So you get them on those bikes, they start them up, you try slow them down, show them how to work the clutch, but they just take off and two or three of them run into something. But they eventually learn. But it's a big deal to have transportation and training and just regular contact with our people, encouraging them, finding out whether they need Bibles, what do you need to go be more effective. So they're over there by themselves now, I say doing a little circle like this, but with Open Eyes helping them, their reach is just so expanded, and so they're reaching a lot more people for Christ.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, I was really moved by what you were doing when you shared it with us. That was more fun than the turkeys, especially since I didn't get one.

Frank Harrison: You didn't get one. I remember that. Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. It was kind of lousy, dragging me down in Texas. You got two and I couldn't even get one.

Frank Harrison: Well, we'll have to correct that.

Dr. James Dobson: We got to do that again sometime. So he began to get ill. He had pneumonia. Did you know about it?

Frank Harrison: No, I didn't. I really didn't know that he... James would not complain seriously. His mom is pretty good with pain too. I'm going to tell you if something's hurting me, but James would not. He would not. I've had more doctors tell me, "Frank,

it could have been a hundred different things, eating their food and just living with them," but we know he almost died from malaria at one time. Again, we were told acute pneumonia.

Jan Harrison: We had talked to James on the phone on a Friday night, and it was in October, 2010, and he sounded tired, but I mean, he was telling us what he was doing. I remember that he seemed to have kind of a little nagging cough, but it's dusty there, it's hot there. It wasn't anything alarming. He told us what was going on. He was frustrated about a couple of things, but he was very... He seemed fine, but tired is what I would say. And then we prayed together, we hung up the phone, and that was, again, a Friday. And then on the following Tuesday, Frank received the call from the U.S. Embassy that said James had passed away. So for us-

Dr. James Dobson: It's tender to you today too, isn't it?

Jan Harrison: Of course, it is. I mean, I'll never forget it. For me, I mark time by that day.

Roger Marsh: Well, can you imagine what it must have been like for Frank and Jan Harrison in that moment? Hearing James's tired voice and his slight cough on a Friday, not knowing it would be their final conversation with him. And then the following Tuesday, receiving that devastating phone call from the Embassy. Their story reminds us just how quickly life can change, amen?

You've been listening to a special edition of Family Talk and a powerful conversation featuring Dr. James Dobson and his dear friends, Frank and Jan Harrison. Now if you missed any portion of today's broadcast, or if you'd like to share this interview with others go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

Keep in mind that on the next edition of Family Talk, we'll hear part three, the powerful conclusion of this dynamic conversation so do be sure to be with us for that. Now during the course of the broadcast of course Dr. Dobson has been recommending the book by Frank Harrison called *The Transformation Factor: Leading Your Company for Good, for God and for Growth*. You can reserve your copy today when you go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk and follow the prompts. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

And when you think about what the Harrisons went through and the loss of their son and how that could have easily torn their marriage apart, they leaned into each other and into their faith. And that's one of the powerful principles that Dr. James Dobson and his wife, Shirley, write about in their outstanding book called *Night Light for Couples*. Whether you're newlyweds or you're celebrating your golden anniversary, regular quiet moments with your spouse, times to renew your love and intimacy with each other and the Lord are imperative. In the devotional book called *Night Light for Couples* you will find personal, practical and biblical insights that have sustained the Dobson's

marriage. Well this year, they'll be celebrating their 65th wedding anniversary if that's any indication as to how effective these principles can actually be. When you go to drjamesdobson.org, click the link for the *Night Light for Couples* devotional book by Dr. Dobson and his wife, Shirley. We'll be happy to send it to you as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in support of the ministry of Family Talk today.

And keep in mind that here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we are committed to sharing stories that strengthen faith and bring hope. These daily broadcasts are made possible through friends like you who believe in the power of biblical truth to transform lives. For more than 45 years, Dr. Dobson has been privileged to share these powerful testimonies of God's faithfulness through his broadcast ministries like Family Talk. But we can only continue this important work through the generous support of listeners like you. If you would like to support us in this mission, we encourage you to make a donation online at drjamesdobson.org or by calling us at 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825.

I'm Roger Marsh. Glad to have you listening today. Be sure to tune in again next time when Dr. James Dobson will conclude his conversation with Frank and Jan Harrison. That's right here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust, for the family you love.

Announcer:

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