



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Path of Endurance

Guest(s): Elisabeth Elliot Gren

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Dr. James Dobson: Hello everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, a radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson and thank you for joining us for this program.

Roger Marsh: Well welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh and today we're sharing an unforgettable message from our archives featuring the late Elisabeth Elliot Gren whose remarkable life story has inspired millions. As a young missionary widow, Elisabeth faced a profound choice to retreat from her calling in the wake of tragedy or to continue her husband, Jim's missionary work with the indigenous people of Ecuador, the very people who had taken his life. Instead of retreating into bitterness, Elisabeth chose the path of radical forgiveness ministering to and living with the same indigenous community that had made her a widow. Now her extraordinary journey of faith did not end there. Through multiple seasons of loss and renewal, Elisabeth remained unwavering in her trust in God's perfect plan. After returning to the United States, she authored more than 20 books and hosted a national radio ministry. Eventually she would marry again, only to tragically lose her second husband to cancer. Graciously, God blessed her with a third marriage that lasted until her passing in 2015.

Today, you'll hear Elisabeth sharing her powerful testimony before 18,000 students at a Campus Crusade convention in Kansas City. Her message about finding purpose through pain and seeing God's Hand even in life's darkest moments remains just as relevant today as when it was first delivered. So whether you're familiar with Elisabeth's story or you'll be hearing it for the first time, prepare to be deeply moved by this classic edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Elisabeth Elliot: A few generations ago, a young Scottish athlete was put to the test. An athlete put to the test, you say? What else is new? Happens all the time. It's the only way to become an athlete: training, coaching, endurance, tests. The one I'm talking about was put to a test not by his coach, but by his God. With every chance of winning a gold medal, this man went to France to run in the Olympics. The test came the minute he got off the boat. Somebody told him that his race was to be run on Sunday. You know who I'm talking about, Eric Liddell. I heard somebody say that. The man in the film, *Chariots of Fire*... Liddell was a Scottish Presbyterian. Running a race on Sunday was to him, unthinkable.

Do you remember what happens next in the film? Does he get in touch with his feelings? Do you find him sharing his hang-ups with 38 of his closest friends? You don't see any of that. The decision is already made. The decision has been made years before, as a matter of fact, when he made up his mind to follow Jesus Christ in obedience. Jesus was Lord of Eric Liddell's life. That settled a whole lot of things before they even came up. Liddell was a man who knew what really mattered. Does anything matter that much to you?

The Quechua Indians in the jungle of Ecuador had a very handy word that worked for an answer to anything. The word is [foreign language 00:03:31], and it means "for nothing," for no particular purpose. I remember one time, a young Indian came to my husband, Jim Elliot, and told him that he wanted to be baptized. Jim said, "Why?" He said, "Huh?" Jim said, "Why do you want to be baptized?" He said, "[Foreign language 00:03:50]," for nothing, no particular reason. Well, Jim said, "You're going to have to come up with a better answer than that." What do you live for? [Foreign language 00:04:04]?

I want to tell you a little bit about that missionary, Jim Elliot. I knew him when he was a college student. As far as we women could see, he was unattainable: handsome, popular, champion wrestler, president of the Foreign Missions Fellowship, honors student, campus clown, but alas, a woman-hater. That's what we thought. Incidentally, guys, if you want them to swarm around you, let them think you're unattainable. Give them something to wonder about.

We were way off. Jim Elliot was no woman-hater. He had found out when he was in high school that he can spend an awful lot of time and money on girls. They were very attractive, and very interesting, and very expensive. He decided when he got to college, that he would just delete them from his schedule. It sounded like the men that were cheering on that one.

He wanted something much more important. He had made up his mind that he wanted two degrees, a bachelor of arts, which the college was qualified to confer, and an AUG, which the college was not qualified to confer. The one he wanted most was AUG, approved unto God. He got that out of the Apostle Paul's letter to Timothy, and he had made up his mind what he wanted to live for. I found out how resolute Jim was in his decision when the college yearbooks came out. We girls would hope forlornly that the man that we had our eye on might put something besides his name in the book, something sweet.

It was with great trepidation that I presented my book to Jim Elliott, asking for his autograph. Very fast with his flowing, rapid hand, he wrote, "Jim Elliot, 2 Timothy 2:4." How long do you think it took me to get back to the dormitory and get my Bible to look up that verse? I was desperately hoping for a cryptic message. There was nothing cryptic about it. It said, "A soldier on active service will not let himself be involved in civilian affairs." It's not the end of the verse. "He must be wholly at his commanding officer's disposal."

Now think back to Eric Liddell. How had he gotten to be a champion runner? By putting himself at the disposal of a coach, by learning the rules, by being obedient. Obedience to a track coach is bound to involve a tremendous amount of something called endurance. Whatever it is you want, it's going to cost you something. Eric Liddell put his gold medal on the line. Jim Elliott, his life, ultimately. If it's God's will you want more than anything in the world, it's going to mean endurance. During Jim's junior year, he went through what he used to call an exercise, a wrestling with God over some issue. In this case, the issue was marriage.

The Apostle Paul wrote quite a bit about the advantages of being single. He wished that everyone were as he was, single. Jim had a sneaking suspicion that that was exactly what God might be calling him to do: to remain single for the rest of his life. It had nothing to do with being Jim's thing. It had nothing to do with his temperaments or preferences. He really did like women, but his response was, "Okay. If that's what God wants, that's what I'm going to do."

The test for Jim Elliot was falling in love. Anything wrong with that? He was swept off his feet by love for a girl. She had been attracted to him for a long time and had been wrestling with God over the same question of singleness, and like Jim had finally said, "Yes, Lord. If that's what you're asking, I'll do it. I'll be a single missionary." I remember that commitment very well. I was that girl. I remember Memorial Day, 1948, just before I was to graduate, Jim asked me to go for a walk with him. Jim Elliot asking me to go for a walk, I nearly died. I could hardly breathe for excitement.

I tell you this because I want you to know that I've been where you are. I know your feelings. "Well, Bett," Jim said, "I guess we better get squared away about how we feel about each other." I nearly went through the sidewalk, "Feel about each other." What gave him the idea that I had any feelings for him? I thought I'd been doing a terrific job of concealing my feelings. I wasn't just playing hard to get. I was determined to be just like Jim: impossible to get. What were we to make of this tornado of passion we suddenly felt for each other? Did it mean that God wanted us to forget all the agonies we'd gone through over our singleness struggles and just fall into each other's arms?

We had a few weeks before graduation. We took some more walks. We did some more pondering, and praying alone, and some more talking together. One night, we wandered into a cemetery and found ourselves sitting on a convenient marble slab, trying to sort through what God was trying to tell us. I said that it really didn't make a whole lot of sense to me to tell God that we wanted Him to handle this whole thing if we intended to keep our hands on. It was going to have to be hands off, turning it entirely over to the Lord. You see, after graduation, there wasn't much chance that we were going to see each other because Jim had another year in college. He lived in Oregon. I lived in New Jersey. He was headed for South America. I thought I was headed for Africa or perhaps the South Seas.

"Does it makes sense to you," I asked him. "Should we write?" He didn't say anything for a while and then we sat there in silence. Finally, he said, "You're right. It doesn't make sense. I know you're right because this morning, the passage that I was reading in my Bible was about Abraham and Isaac. Abraham made the sacrifice. He tied the son down on the altar and he raised the knife. I knew right then that God was asking me to give up the most precious thing in my life: you. Would I give it to Him, or would I refuse? I said I'd give it." "That's where you're going to stay, Bett," he said, "On the altar, unless God shows me that I don't need to make that final sacrifice."

There was another long silence. Then suddenly, we realized that the moon had risen behind us and was casting the shadow of a stone cross between us on that slab. We wanted above everything else, the will of God. Here is the crux of the matter. By the way, did you know that the word, crux, means cross? Until the will and the affections are brought under the authority of Christ, we have not begun to understand, let alone to accept, his Lordship. The cross, as it enters the love life, will reveal the heart's truth. I'm convinced that this is the point at which many young people refuse the cross, refuse to endure hardship.

Jim and I waited five and a half years before God gave us a green light to get married. It was a test. Were we going to trust God during all those years of silence, and separation, and uncertainty? Mind you, we had no commitment to each other. I haven't time to tell you the rest of the story. I want to say this much, that on our wedding day, the Lord gave us a verse from Isaiah. "This is our God. We have waited for Him." It was worth it. Is it worth it? How many things can you think of that are worth suffering for?

Let me tell you a story. Once upon a time before you were born, there were, in Ecuador, a tribe of so-called savages. Not very much was known about these people. They were naked. They used stone tools, and they killed strangers. Nobody had ever gone into their territory and come out alive. Missionaries had been praying that God would enable them someday to take the gospel to these Aucas, but it had never happened.

One day in October of 1955, Jim Elliot instituted a program of dropping gifts to those Indians with the hope that they would be able to break down their hostility and prepare the way for an attempt to reach them. You can imagine our excitement, our trembling, the prayers that went up. On the evening in January of 1956, just before these men left, they sang together that hymn, "We Rest on Thee, Our Shield and Our Defender." A week later, they were all speared to death. Why? Why would God allow a thing like that to happen? He was their shield, their defender, and He let them get speared to death. Is it worth it? How many things can you think of that are worth living for?

I want you to listen, ladies and gentlemen, young men, young women. There is nothing worth living for unless it's worth dying for. Have you made up your mind? The verse that brought assurance to me was 1 John 2:17, "The world and all its passionate desires will one day disappear, but the man who is following

the will of God is part of the permanent and cannot die." Jim Elliot wrote in his diary when he was 22, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose. He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." I don't know what particular endurance God is asking of you right this minute. Perhaps it's in your love life, in the willingness to submit your longings and to wait patiently for God's best for you. To stay out of bed. God is saying, "I have something infinitely better for you than you can imagine. Will you trust me? Will you wait? Will you obey me?"

My husband and I live on the coast of Massachusetts. Do you know what motto is posted in every rescue station along the coast? "You have to go out. You don't have to come back." That, I believe, should be the motto of every Christian. You have to go out. You don't have to come back. Jim Elliott often used to quote a poem written by Amy Carmichael of India. "Hast thou no scar? No hidden scar on foot, or side, or hand? I hear thee sung as mighty in the land. I hear them hail thy bright, ascendant star. Hast thou no scar? Hast thou no wound? Yet I was wounded by the archers: spent, leaned Me against a tree to die, and rent by ravening beasts that compassed Me. I swooned. Hast thou no wound? No wound? No scar? But as the Master must the servant be, and pierced are the feet that follow Me. But thine are whole. Can he have followed far who hast no wound nor scar?"

Roger Marsh: You've been listening to a classic broadcast featuring the voice of the late author and missionary, Elisabeth Elliott, here on Family Talk. You can sense how much this message resonated in the hearts of her audience that day. They really connected with what Mrs. Elliott was sharing about her life with her husband, Jim. To wrap up, let's listen to Dr. Dobson's response to that thunderous applause when this broadcast was originally aired.

Dr. James Dobson: They were not only applauding her speech. They were applauding her life. She had lived a life of dedication to the cause of Christ, and she certainly had her scars and her wounds. I mean, to lose her young husband, the one that was a beloved to her, and then to recover, and get on her feet, and marry again, and lose a husband to cancer. She watched him die. She knew of which she spoke on that day, of scars and wounds. God did not promise to protect us from life's challenges so that we can't identify with those who have experienced a veil of tears. He wants us to be able to feel for them, and identify with them, and to be of help to them. In the process, we go through difficult times, too.

What amazes me about the story of Jesus is that the high point of His whole life occurred when He was baptized by John the Baptist. The dove came down from heaven, the dove of the Holy Spirit, and said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased." The next verse says, "And straightway, He was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil," be tempted by Satan. That is amazing to me. He went from the high point of his life to the low point, or one of them. I think that is the Christian life. We go through high points. The point of coming to Christ is exhilarating, and you live on a mountaintop for a period of time, but

you will eventually go in the valley, too. You keep your faith in both of them. That's what Elisabeth Elliot was trying to say to us.

Roger Marsh:

Well, it's certainly a powerful message indeed, Doctor. and I know how much it means to you and even in our most challenging moments we can realize they serve a deeper purpose in God's plan. Once again, friend, you're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. We've been presenting a special program from our archives featuring the testimony from the late Elisabeth Elliot Gren. If you'd like to hear today's program again in its entirety or share it with a friend, all you have to do is go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk and you'll find it under today's broadcast. And by the way for more content from Dr. Dobson and Family Talk, be sure you download the official JDFI mobile app. It's available for both Apple and Android devices and this app gives you instant access to our complete library of broadcasts and articles and resources right at your fingertips. So whether you're on your daily commute or maybe you're waiting at the doctor's office and got a little extra time to kill, just taking a quiet moment during your day, whatever the situation is, having the app means you'll have encouraging biblical content ready from the JDFI when you need it. Plus this way you'll never miss an episode with notifications about new broadcasts and exclusive content available only through the JDFI app. So simply search for the James Dobson Family Institute in your device's app store to get started today.

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Before we wrap up today's program, I want to make sure you know about an incredible resource that available for you 24/7 and that is the James Dobson Family Institute website. Packed with exactly what you need for your family's journey. Think of it as your go-to place for real answers about marriage, parenting, you name it. Whether you're a mom looking for encouragement, a dad seeking practical advice, maybe you're single and navigating life's challenges, there is something on our site just for you. Now you can read

articles every day that speak exactly to what you're going through. You can listen to programs that'll encourage your heart and you'll find resources that will help you build a stronger family. From marriage to pro-life perspectives, public policy and culture issues, you'll find everything you need at drjamesdobson.org. So why not head over there today, you'll be glad you did, drjamesdobson.org. Well on behalf of Dr. Dobson and all of us here at the JDFI, I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for listening, 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.