



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Everyday Heroes Who Are Helping Couples Take Their Marriages to New Heights – Part 1

Guest(s): Mark and Jan Yokers

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Dr. James Dobson: Hello everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, the 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, I'm Roger Marsh. Do you ever wonder what makes some marriages not just survive, but truly thrive over decades? Well, on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we're going to introduce you to a couple of everyday heroes who know how to go about that first-hand. Mark and Jan Yokers have spent nearly 60 years strengthening marriages through their ministry of grace and restoration. Their journey began at a Christian college where they fell in love, but their real story is how they weathered life's challenges together. And boy, did they come through some big ones. Most remarkably, they stood strong even as they watched hundreds of marriages around them literally crumble during a devastating church scandal. But instead of becoming casualties themselves, Mark and Jan emerged with deeper wisdom about what makes marriage relationships last, and now they're helping other couples transform their marriages by applying the timeless principles they've discovered. The story of Mark and Jan Yokers reminds us that extraordinary marriages aren't about avoiding problems; they're about growing through them together. Let's join today's host, our own Gary Bauer for this inspiring conversation on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Gary Bauer: Welcome to the Dr. James Dobson Family Talk. We are the broadcast ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Gary Bauer, senior vice president at the Dobson Policy Center and the host of Defending Faith, Family, and Freedom podcast. Today is another episode of our Everyday Heroes series, and we're getting a lot of great feedback about this. We're glad that you enjoy these shows and I think you're going to really enjoy the one that we have today with this lovely couple. Now, imagine being raised to love the Lord, and then you head off to a Christian university and there you meet the person of your dream. Well, that's the basic love story of our guest today here on Family Talk. They are Mark and Jan Yokers, and they have spent nearly 60 years ministering to families and married couples with a message of grace, healing, and restoration. Their own lives have been a story of grace, healing and restoration. This wonderful couple has not experienced an easy journey, like many of us don't, and we want to hear from them today on how God helped them overcome a lot of challenges, economic challenges in their marriage, how they overcame all of

that to become everyday heroes for the kingdom. So Mark and Jan, welcome to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Mark Yokers: Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here.

Jan Yokers: Thank you.

Gary Bauer: Well, fantastic. Well, look, I hope I've tantalized our audience that you all have an interesting story. So why don't we begin about how you did grow up and then go on to attend the same college and met.

Mark Yokers: Yeah, I was born in a family of six boys. My dad was a Lutheran pastor, and my early years were in Michigan, and my parents decided to move us out to Idaho into a small farming community town. And part of it was because we were already in gangs in Saginaw, Michigan, and he wanted to get us out of that environment and out of that atmosphere. And we just loved it there in American Falls, Idaho, and we grew up there and just have great memories and loved growing up. My folks were wonderful people. They loved us. They gave us a whole lot of freedom. We grew up in that farming community working early. Interestingly enough, my journey there was quite interesting. We'll get into that in a minute. What about your upbringing, Jan?

Jan Yokers: It was very different for me. I was an only child, so I didn't have all those brothers to have adventures with. Grew up quiet family, Lutheran family, went to church regularly. My dad was the president of the congregation and my mom was the president of the ALCW Women's, and I met the Lord when I was four years old, and that was totally revolutionary in my life. Absolutely life changing. And so I had Jesus with me throughout my life, and I prayed at different times. And the one thing I remember in junior high, I started praying for my husband, and I think I may have kept him out of a lot of capers that he could have gotten into.

Mark Yokers: Amen to that.

Jan Yokers: And so when I went to PLU, I was not looking for a husband. I had had a real major supernatural encounter with the Lord, and it just radically changed my life. I had a tendency towards depression, and the depression was gone. I had so much joy, and I had such a relationship with Him that I felt like I wasn't looking for boys at that time. And it wasn't too long when this big football player took cuts in line in front of me and just spunky.

Gary Bauer: Wait a minute, Jan, what was that again? He cut in line in front of you?

Jan Yokers: He did. And that was kind of, I didn't like it when people took cuts. And so I was spunky and I said, "Hey, just because you're so big doesn't mean you can take cuts in front of me." And he turned around and looked at me and...

Mark Yokers: Wow, I lost my life right there. And actually at that point at Pacific Lutheran, there was a couple of professors that did not teach the Word of God as it says, and they kind of nix the miracles and other things. And I had a real crisis of faith. And so I was a part of Campus Crusade. I committed myself to the Lord, but it was almost as if I couldn't trust the Bible anymore. And I encountered the Lord just eight days before I met Jan in that line.

And in such a way, it transformed me completely. And I just felt His presence. He just took things out of my life and showed me very clearly how real He was. And then I began a love relationship with His Word, because as soon as I opened His Word after that, He was talking to me and it was alive and it was real, and it was factual. And then I knew that He did multiply the fishes and the loaves, and it wasn't some other story. So eight days later, I met Jan and I was hungry, and it was a long line, and there was, I think three of us and let's just take cuts. People will understand.

Gary Bauer Right. Well, you were an athlete, right? You've probably felt a certain sense of entitlement, and lo and behold, God used that moment for you to meet your future wife.

Mark Yokers: Yes. Yes. And when she said that, and I look back at her, Gary, I still have that picture seared into my mind. She was a brunette, short hair and just glowed. And that glow is what captured me because when I encountered the Lord like I did, he removed lust from my life and I was just free. And in fact, later I thought, I'm never going to get married. I'm going to be like apostle Paul. And so there wasn't any romantic attraction at all, but she was glowed and it was so attractive. We started talking and found out that we'd both experienced the Lord in this remarkable way, and we just went and had dinner together and shared and talked and Jan could play the piano. And what did we do?

Jan Yokers: Yes, we went back to my dorm and I played the piano. I was the church organist, and I played the piano for about two hours, and we sang these songs and we kept saying, look at those words. I mean, it's like we'd never seen those words before. They were just alive in our hearts.

Mark Yokers: And so we became very active on campus and sharing Jesus with others, and we saw many come to Christ and just had a wonderful time in ministry. And Jan and I were just good buds, and we were part of a group there on the campus that were united together in the same heart and faith and love.

Jan Yokers: Well, we did a lot of ministry to hippies at that time. That was late sixties, and we would pray all night together and pray them down off of their drugs and lead them to the Lord. And so it was a pretty remarkable time. And we'd sing on the way up to church and on the way to ministry. We grew close and we got to know each other.

Mark Yokers: Yeah, we grew close and that was a problem because I'm going to be apostle Paul, right?

Gary Bauer: Yes.

Mark Yokers: She became more and more attractive to me, which was a problem. And I knew she liked me. I could tell that there was some sparks going on. So after about a year, we were on an outreach down to LA and David Wilkerson with Teen Challenge, Sonny Arguinizoni had an outreach there in LA and we went down and we were part of that for a while. And while we were down there, I just knew I had to decide. I had to figure out, God, what are you doing because she's just really this wonderful person. And I just spent, I don't know, two, three hours in prayer, just sought the Lord. And at the end of it, I knew that she was to be the one. So I told her, I said, "You know what? I think I need to talk to you." Then what happened?

Jan Yokers: And then we went outside. It was nice weather, went outside and sat on a wall, and he said...

Mark Yokers: I think God wants us to get married.

Jan Yokers: And I said, I agree.

Gary Bauer: You just played the high card there right away, right? Made it clear that God was in the center of this.

Mark Yokers: Yep.

Jan Yokers: That's right.

Mark Yokers: Yep. And we'd never held hands. I mean, we never, I don't know if we'd hug.

Jan Yokers: Oh, we'd never acknowledged each other as close like that.

Mark Yokers: But there was such a unity and such a oneness in our ministry together and for the Lord. And so that was our engagement, and we walked out of that little area holding hands, and everybody on the outreach said, "Uh oh. Look what's happened here." I was a sophomore at this point and Jan was a freshman.

Jan Yokers: Yep. 1967.

Mark Yokers: When we met, and then in 68, actually it was on Christmas Day 68, we got engaged. That's when I asked Jan, I said, I think God wants us to be married. That's a little bit easier to do than just saying, will you marry me, maybe? I don't know. But that's just where we were. That was our mentality, and it was beautiful.

Gary Bauer: The poor lady had to say, yes, Mark. She's being basically told that you and God are asking her for her hand in marriage. That's tough to say no to.

Jan Yokers: Well, it was tough to say no to just him.

Gary Bauer: So it's a great love story, and you have this wonderful engagement, and then you get married and everything's been smooth sailing since then, right?

Jan Yokers: Well, life came.

Mark Yokers: "In this world, you'll have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." So we've had a lot of tribulation.

Gary Bauer: When did you start your family? Soon after that or...

Jan Yokers: That night.

Mark Yokers: When we got married.

Gary Bauer: This is a family show, Jan. I don't need any details.

Mark Yokers: So nine months later after our wedding, we had our first girl and we ended up having four girls by the time we were 29.

Gary Bauer: Wow.

Mark Yokers: They are the love of our life. They all love the Lord, and it's just unbelievably beautiful.

Gary Bauer: Isn't it wonderful when you raise your children, you try to do it in the right way? Dr. Dobson, of course, has spent a whole life giving us advice and counsel on how to do that, but at the end of the day, God gives us this thing called free will, and we're taught that if you raise them in the right way, they'll end up the right way. But not always. I hear tragic stories all the time. So when you see your adult children and see them following the path that you first introduced them to, it's one of the greatest blessings you can possibly have.

Mark Yokers: Amen to that.

Jan Yokers: Yes, it definitely is. This morning in prayer, we were just praising the Lord for our whole family and how they're serving God and how one of our sons-in-law really turned around and he's just a remarkable Christian, hearing from the Lord and following Him. And that's just a joy to see that happen in people's lives.

Mark Yokers: We regularly pray with all of our girls, three of them are in Seattle, one of them is in California, and we're on the line with her a lot, and we see the others a lot.

One of our daughters is the CEO of our business, and so we have a lot of interaction with her, but we're all close and we're so grateful.

Gary Bauer: In those opening years, how were you putting food on the table? What was your livelihood? And I understand there was some interesting things that happened then that seemed small, but God used a little side business, but talk to us about that.

Mark Yokers: I immediately went to Bible college. I went to PLU for three years, but my hunger was for the Word of God, and it was a new starting Bible college and a church that we became a part of. To get food on the table, now, Jan's pregnant, right? At that time I started, I was an iron worker, and I'd started that when I was in college, and I did that at first, but soon after we got married, I started roofing. And so I did that for about three years steady and from roofing, I hurt my back.

Jan Yokers: Roofing's hard on the back.

Mark Yokers: I had graduated and became a teacher in that same Bible college, but I love the Word of God and still do. It's my life. That was a fun transition.

Gary Bauer: A lot of couples today struggle with needing to have a couple of jobs. During these opening years, you're starting your own family, you're beginning your careers and so forth. You didn't necessarily have the same marriage and parenting philosophy. Jan, talk to us a little bit about that and how that was a struggle getting on the same page.

Jan Yokers: Yes, it was. Mark was the fun dad, and he always just said, oh, sure, go do it. Have fun to the kids. And there were certain precautions that I had, and I would often feel like the bad guy in the situation because dad said yes, and I had a tendency sometimes to say no. So that caused a lot of conflict, and he was pretty permissive, and he's really able to concentrate. So even though he's in the room, he's studying for his Bible college classes, the girls do something or say something, and I'm the one doing almost all the disciplining.

Gary Bauer: I don't know how severe it was for you all, but this is not an unusual problem and it's not good. My wife, Carol and I, when we were raising our family, we had different philosophies about the kids eating their meals. My view was you sat there until you finished your meal because that's how I grew up. And Carol was a lot more flexible on that. And of course, the kids were smart enough to play us off of each other. So if you're young, people out there and you've just gotten married, it really is important to try to get on the same page on child rearing and so forth, isn't it?

Jan Yokers: Yes. And Dr. Dobson really helped us with that. We went to his first film series that came out when he was in his rust colored leisure suit. Do you remember that with the big sideburns? And so our church was not real great on having us

go hear from other people. It was all maybe in-house. That was part of the problem where we went. And so we kind of snuck over to another church and watch those, and that helped us so much. I mean, Dr. Dobson helped us in many areas, get on the same page in child rearing. We listened. Even when Mark was window washing, he listened to Dr. Dobson every day, and I'd listened to him when I went for walks in the morning. So I felt like I knew him really well. We went on walks together.

Mark Yokers: As far as our upbringing, it was worlds apart.

Jan Yokers: Yes.

Mark Yokers: At the dinner table, we were laughing and joking and it's just loud and busy. And when we took baths, whether we needed them or not, we took a bath once a week. I mean, we were in the woods, we were out in this dirt, we were everywhere, but we'd take a bath once a week and we'd share the water. So the oldest would take the first bath and then the next one, and mom would scrub on us and whatnot, all the way down through number six. Now, number six, the water was a little bit brown by then, but that's all right. We'd towel him off and he's good. Whereas Jan was scrubbed on by her mom all the time. She couldn't have a speck of dirt on her. So it was a totally different world. And so I grew up with all the noise and activity and things going on, and you had to be able to concentrate, whereas for her, it was quiet and "shush, be quiet, Jan." You know what I mean? It's so totally different worlds. And when we tried to mesh working with the girls, that's when it became tough. And as far as discipline and everything else, it was a lot of challenges there.

Gary Bauer: And this is exactly the sort of thing that Dr. Dobson has spoken about and written about so many times, and our paths crossed many times in recent years at events for the James Dobson Family Institute. And I know that the help and guidance that you heard from his radio programs and the various events he did in those early years of your marriage that has linked you with the Dobsons and with this ministry. And that link has lasted for decades, which is a wonderful thing.

Jan Yokers: Yes, it really is. We're so grateful.

Mark Yokers: We are super grateful 'cause he was a lifeline to us and we got all his books, read 'em, went to his seminars to understand the impact of marriage in our lives. You kind of have to know what we went through. The church that we were a part of, we'd raised our kids there, and by 1988, we were actually asked to leave. What had happened is that God was moving in a powerful way in that place, but pride entered in and a love for spiritual experience and in a way that wasn't healthy, and the teaching on family wasn't very good. And it ended up that that arrogance brought us to a place where we felt like we were better than other churches, but we became more and more ingrown. We quit reaching out the same way. We weren't in touch with the body of Christ very much. And

then a terrible spiritual happening began to change people, and they thought it was a love of God to be with somebody else's spouse.

Gary Bauer: Seriously?

Mark Yokers: And it happened all throughout the church.

Gary Bauer: Oh my goodness. What a terrible...

Mark Yokers: There was teaching to try to support it. And it became a reason for 230 divorces within a matter of years. And we saw friends that we loved, dear people. I mean, these are wonderful people, and we have many, many friends from the church still that we were in at that time, but it imploded and it was destroyed. There were satellite churches, lives were just wrecked. But the biggest hurt was really for the kids, wouldn't you say, Jan?

Jan Yokers: Oh, yes. Yes. In fact, at that time, someone from the Dobson's ministry called us to pray, and I just wept and said pray for the kids because the kids still today have repercussions from that and just don't want to have anything to do with God because of it.

Mark Yokers: Yep. A terrible deception.

Gary Bauer: It sounds like something you would see in a bad movie or something.

Mark Yokers: Or worse. And David Wilkerson said, he said, I think this is the greatest deception I've ever seen, the worst deception, and it just destroyed marriage. That was the devil's primary target was marriage. And we struggled. We were a part of it for a while and just feeling very uneasy, and one day I had a visitation from the Lord. The Lord came to me and totally broke me down with His truth and His love, and He told me three things, Gary. He said, "Number one, go back to your family" because it was just crazy. The love between people, the adults across marriage lines had become an important factor, and the kids were left behind. Number two, He told me, He said, "Get out of the ministry." And so I left the ministry and haven't been back then, although we minister a lot, I left the ministry. And number three. He said, "I'm going to grind this system to powder and scatter the people to other churches to get healed."

Gary Bauer: Mark and Jan, this life story of your relationship and your marriage, it's just really incredible and it's inspiring, but there's so much more I want to ask you about, and I think so much more that you could share with our audience. Could we impose on you to come back and do a second show with us?

Jan Yokers: Sure.

Mark Yokers: Certainly.

Jan Yokers: We'd be glad to.

Gary Bauer: Fantastic.

Roger Marsh: Every enduring marriage carries battle scars that when healed by grace become badges of honor and wisdom. You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk as we just concluded day one of our conversation with Mark and Jan Yokers. Their remarkable journey from college sweethearts to marriage ministry leaders demonstrates how God can use even the darkest seasons to bring unexpected light. Now, if you missed any portion of today's broadcast or you want to share it with someone you love, visit drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

Well, as we've been hearing from the Yokers, strong marriages don't just happen by accident. They are built through intentional choices, biblical wisdom, and the grace that comes from walking with Christ. And that's exactly why the work we do here at Family Talk matters so much. Every day, we hear from couples who tell us how these conversations have helped save their marriages, strengthen their families, and deepened their faith. Right now, we have an incredible opportunity to reach even more families with life-changing content. Recently, a group of dear friends established a historic matching grant for the JDFI ministry. It's the Dr. James Dobson Memorial Matching Grant. It provides matching funds now through December 31, 2025 for up to \$6 million dollars. This gift is an incredible memorial and a statement of confidence in the only organization entrusted by Dr. Dobson himself to carry out his legacy and expand his work to new generations and geographies. As we work to promote the institution of the family, your doubled gift will make all the difference in helping us continue this ministry throughout the year ahead. You can make a secure donation online at drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. If you prefer, you can make your tax-deductible donation over the phone when you call 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Or if you prefer, you can send your contribution through the U.S. Postal Service. Our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk P.O. Box 39000 Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code, 80949.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and on behalf of all of us here at the James Dobson Family Institute, thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to tune in again next time for the conclusion of Gary Bauer's conversation with Mark and Jan Yokers, continuing their discussion on everyday heroes who are helping couples take their marriages to new heights. That's coming up right here on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you can still trust, for the family you love.

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