



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Raising Boys: Wounded Spirits – Part 1

Guest(s): Dr. James Dobson

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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. I'm Roger Marsh. You know there's an old nursery rhyme that says, little girls are made of sugar and spice and everything nice, but what about boys remember? Well, in just a moment, we're going to explore the unique world of boys, how they think, how they feel, and what struggles they face as they grow up. And trust me, it has very little to do with frogs and snails and puppy dog tails. On today's edition of Family Talk, we're featuring a timeless presentation from Dr. James Dobson. It was originally part of his "Bringing Up Boys" teaching series. During this presentation, Dr. Dobson unpacks the nature and thought processes of young boys. He identifies their anxieties and fears and he opens up about some painful experiences from his own childhood that actually helped shape to who he became in later years. Dr. Dobson will also address some tough realities facing boys today, including bullying, peer pressure and wounds that can last a lifetime if left unaddressed.

For moms and dads listening, this broadcast will help you better understand and parent and love your sons. Now before we begin today's broadcast, I want to remind you that right now every gift to Family talk will be matched dollar for dollar through the Dr. James Dobson Memorial Matching Grant. That means your donation will have twice the impact in strengthening families and sharing biblical truth for up to \$6 million. And that's going on now through December 31. So to double your impact, you can visit drjamesdobson.org. Now, I should note that today's program does address sensitive topics including bullying and threats to child safety. It may not be suitable for young listeners, so parental discretion is definitely advised. Here now is Dr. James Dobson with his presentation titled "Wounded Spirits" on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, we, we've been talking about boys on this series that has taken us in many directions. We've been talking about why boys are like they are, how they think, how they're different from girls, and most importantly, why they are in such trouble today. And it is certainly true. Every index of psychological and physiological health is showing that boys are doing very poorly, more so than girls. The truth of the matter is it's the boys that are really going down. Now, not all of them, but far too many of 'em are, and so we've been talking about the reasons why. The most important one, of course is the disintegration of the

family that just unsettles both boys and girls, but it's even harder on boys than it is girls because they're more volatile than girls are. And because of that, you have the absence of fathers or the lack of involvement of fathers, and so there's no role models for a lot of these kids, and that's yet another component of family breakup.

We talked a time or two ago about what I call routine panic or that tendency of families today. It's not a tendency; it's almost a certainty that everybody is going faster and faster and faster. They're exhausted. There's no time. Nobody's home, and the kids really don't do well under those circumstances and again, it's the boys that do the worst. Now today I want to turn a corner and talk about another dimension of this problem with boys. Frank Peretti, the author, he's written a book on that subject and he has a good reason to understand it. Frank had a huge tumor in his face when he was born and it distorted his face and he took him a long time to talk about it because he was so grotesque that the kids called him a monster and he became a monster in his own mind. Can you imagine what that would be like to feel like a monster, not only to feel maybe not worthy or not accepted, but to feel like a monster?

That's the way he felt. Fortunately, the surgery was done and Frank looks normal today, but his spirit was still affected and that's what he calls wounded spirits. It is that circumstance where we go through a crisis of confidence that cuts all the way to the soul of a child and stays with them throughout life. And it is very evident for many young people today, not just because they're physically distorted in one way or another, but because they are perhaps abused at home or they are ignored or neglected or mistreated. I saw a study where the researchers found that in the United States alone, 325,000 kids are sexually molested every year. 325,000 of them, and they are in some cases involved in pornography. In some cases they're involved in prostitution and then sexually abused in one way or another. 325,000 is far more than the researchers expected.

Now, who's doing this kind of thing? Who would do this to a child? Well, sadly, it is not the greasy tramp that's hanging around a mall or a restroom. 47% of those kids are abused by their own families, by relatives, and 49% of them are abused by an acquaintance or somebody that the child has reason to trust. Only 4% are abused by a stranger. It's happening right at home. See, all of these things I've been describing, all of them linked to the same issue, it has to do with the breakup of the family and with all of the things that flow from that. Now when you're talking about wounded spirits, I think it's really important to talk about the impact of the culture, and I've dealt with that in my book, *Bringing Up Boys*, especially the entertainment industry. The filth, the utter filth, and the violence and the elicit sexuality that is pumped into the veins of our kids from very, very early in life makes a profound impact on them.

I talked in this book again about the movie that came out called *Scream*. You remember that? Remember the movie *Scream*? I hope you didn't see it, and I'm

most assuredly hope that your children didn't see it. *Scream* opened with a girl being murdered in a brutal way, and then the murderer cut her open and disemboweled her and hung her on a clothes line for her mother to find. Now, this was the most popular movie teenagers saw during that era that is incredible that nobody yelled about this. Horrible stuff is produced by Miramax, which is owned by Disney. Thanks a lot Michael Eisner for doing this to our kids. Take the money and run, sir, you and the rest of the Hollywood moguls. I get angry when I think about what you're doing to our kids. What did he do? He turned around and made *Scream 2* and *Scream 3* to exploit the kids even more.

I'm also very, very concerned about the emphasis on body image that is coming out of Hollywood. No kid feels he can measure up. No kid feels entirely adequate because there's no way as a little girl for example, that she can match the sculptured surgically improved body of the girls and women on *Baywatch*. There's no way that she can ever measure up to that. She can always feel inadequate, always feel somewhat less than what she ought to be. The studies that have been done about very young children at this point are shocking to me. Do you know that 80% of fourth grade girls, eight out of ten fourth grade girls have tried to diet because they feel overweight? 50% of all children between eight and 11 are dissatisfied with their weight. So we tell these very little kids, "You are a fool. You're a failure. You don't look right. There's something basically wrong with you because you can't measure up."

in the South Pacific Islands, they begin to get American television, and so for the first time, Fijian girls were exposed to Melrose Place and Beverly Hills 90210. And so they were getting this kind of trash given to them for the first time and it had an immediate impact on them and they started talking to others about being too big and too fat. 62% of them attempted to diet as soon as they saw that, and this is beamed all over the world. Can you imagine folks in Kenya, these little children in the Maasai Warrior tribe sitting in a mud hut now have access to *MTV*? See, we're exporting that stuff all over the world and it's having a great impact on kids. Girls are experiencing it, boys are suffering in some ways even more.

There's just really no one who is immune to it. I think arguably the most glamorous woman in the last 50 years has been Princess Diana. Before she died, she was admired by women and men all around the world. Look what she had. She had everything. She was beautiful. She was fabulously wealthy. She had the very finest of clothes that money could buy and money did buy, and everywhere she went, there were paparazzi, these photographers that followed her around. There's no woman that's been given the kind of attention and respect that she has. So much so that she didn't want it. And yet Princess Diana looked in the mirror and didn't like what she saw. She felt fat and she became an anorexic. She had an eating disorder. If that doesn't say it all, when you've got it all, you still feel like you don't have anything, and yet that's the way it has been in our culture.

Now, why do I give the illustrations regarding women but when we're here to talk about boys? The reason is because the research now shows that there is no difference, this is quite surprising to me. There is no difference in concern over body image between and girls, they all approach it the same way and boys struggle in the same way that girls do. They all want to be powerful and you get a little 4-year-old boy, what's he going to tell you? He's going to say, "Dad, look at this. Look at this dad." He points to the place where a muscle may be someday and what's dad supposed to say? He's supposed to say, "Oh yeah, you're really strong" because that's what he wants to hear. What does that mean when that little boy grows up and he doesn't grow up? What does that mean for a kid that's late in developing?

What does that mean for a tiny boy who is uncoordinated and he doesn't play football and he can't play basketball and he's really teased by the others? Kids are cruel to each other. It's amazing what they do to each other, and they take a little kid like this and they call him shrimp and wimp and runt and gnat and all the names that go to the heart of who he is. It's not just that he has a nickname, it's that the nickname to some degree accurately describes the way he is seen and it begins to eat on his soul and begins to affect him. I was at a McDonald's hamburger place before I had a heart attack and took all the fun out of eating and I was sitting in the car and I was eating this hamburger and I looked in the rear view mirror and I saw a scrawny, emaciated, starving little kitten come out on the ledge behind my car and it touched my heart.

I've always been a sucker for an underdog or in this case an undercat. And so I got out of the car and I walked back to this little kitten. It was so pitiful, and I tore off a chunk of my hamburger and I kind of threw it down for her and the little kitten took a step toward it and a big tomcat came out of the bushes and ran out and grabbed that and disappeared back into the bushes, and this little kitten also ran into the bushes and I couldn't get her to come out again. I called her and I tried to entice her with food and I thought, this reminds me of my years as a junior high teacher. This is what the kids do to each other. Those that have no confidence, those that have been abused gradually get the courage to come out from the shadows and they're going to go out for basketball.

I'm going to go out for basketball. They take a chance. They ask a girl to the prom or what have you, so they come out of the shadows and then they just get mauled. They get jumped on by the other kids and they run back in. This is what they deal with. I received a phone call from a mother and she was very, very concerned about her 12-year-old boy. I'll call him Brad. I know this family. It's one of the strongest families I've had the privilege of knowing. Deeply committed to their kids. Father deeply committed to his son, Brad, but they discovered almost by accident that Brad coming out of this wonderful home was contemplating suicide and it terrified them obviously, and they began investigating and fortunately the word got out before he did it, but they tried to find out why would do that.

Why would a kid that's loved at home and has good relationships with his sisters, why would he want to do something like that? It's the same old story. I've heard it a million times. I've seen it in working with kids. He was being bullied by the other kids at school, one in particular who's bigger than he was and began pushing him around and taunting him because he said his ears protruded just a little bit, not much, just didn't have to be much, protruded a little, and it took away his desire to live. Now people say it's an overreaction, my goodness, why do you get so excited about this? Everybody goes through that. Sure they do. Most of us did and most of us got through it, but most of us are different for having gone through it and some of us didn't get through it and have carried that with them for the rest of their lives.

Bullying is a huge, huge problem in this culture. A huge problem. The Kaiser Foundation did research on this and found that 74% of kids between eight and 11 years of age have been bullied. That's nearly everybody. 74% and 86% of kids all ages have been bullied. This is a phenomenon that's taken place in school and the impact of it lasts for a lifetime. You just don't get over that very quickly. Maybe one reason I feel so strongly about this with reference to boys is because I used to be one and because I've been through it too. When I was 14, I ran around with kids older than me and that worked until we got into junior high and then I began taking flak from these kids and it was only two years of my life that was painful to me. The rest of my life has been wonderful.

I have nothing to complain about, but in those two years it's pretty tough because I was taking it. I was really getting it, and I remember one day when it had just really been a terrible day for me that I came home alone and boy, at 14, I sure wouldn't have wanted you to know this. I cried all the way home. 14, I cried all the way home and I got home and as usual, my good dad was there and he sat me down and we talked about it. What had happened, and you see what he did is he talked me down from the precipice. This is really important for you to understand. If you've got parents that are involved like Brad, when you run into these things, you can work your way through them and you can release the tensions, but many kids don't have that.

There is nobody at home and nobody cares and maybe they care, but they're too exhausted to even be involved, and so these tensions grow and they get more angry and there's a kind of a rage that develops inside. I found my own way to deal with this. When I was 16, we moved down to South Texas and I was determined I was not going to be pushed around again, and the first night I was there, I went to a football game alone. I sat up in the stands and a kid behind me was banging me on the head with his program. Great reception to a new town, and I turned around and I jumped right in the middle of him and we had a big fight. My first night there we had this huge fight and of course that kid became my best friend and that's usually the way it works, and in fact, folks, I said that on the air, told that story on the air and I said, his name's Ellis Camp and I haven't seen him since the night we graduated.

If anybody ever heard of Ellis Camp, tell him that I'd like to talk to him. Would you believe Ellis Camp was listening to me at that moment on the radio and he wasn't a Christian in high school. He had become a Baptist minister, but about two or three days after that fight in the stands, there were two or three other boys that were harassing me and giving me trouble. One of 'em was pretty good size and he was following me down the hall and he was stepping on my heel and he was pushing me. I was a new kid in town. They saw me as an easy mark and I turned around and I threw my books in his face. Yes, both of 'em and by the time he could see again, I was on top of him. I tell you that to say that's not the most mature way to handle something, but you know what?

Guess what stopped? Bullying stopped because the word got around. I was six two and I was strong, but if I had been about eight inches shorter and weighed about 25 pounds less, they would've made me absolutely miserable. Here is the point: we have been seeing in the schools and in other settings, the gang warfare and other things, the violence that's taking place among the young, especially among boys. Just look at the school shootings. It's not the girls that are doing that. It's the boys by a factor of about 10 or 12 or maybe 14. It's the boys that are doing it. They're the ones who don't cope well with pressure and with no one there, with families not there to help them cope with this. Then the rage grows, and then you have the kind of violence that we've been seeing. Santee High School in San Diego where two kids were shot. That was done by Andy Williams and he had been taunted for being little and not a man. There you see it. There you have it. You start looking at each one of those events. I'm not saying that there's any excuse for it. I'm not saying that we should not hold those young people accountable. Of course we should. It's a horrible thing that they're doing, but behavior has a cause. It has a reason, it has a foundation, and usually you can find the foundation in wounded spirits.

Roger Marsh:

Dr. Dobson's honesty about his own struggles with bullying reminds us that no child should have to face these battles alone. You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and a powerful message from Dr. Dobson about understanding the wounded spirits of boys. Keep in mind, if you'd like to go back and listen to this program again or to share it with another parent who needs to hear this wisdom, go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. Every day we hear from parents who are struggling to help their sons and their daughters navigate a culture that seems designed to tear them down. We might've been five or seven or 13, but we were "their age" when you compare what kids are going through today versus what we went through. Your support of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk makes it possible for us to provide Dr. Dobson's biblical wisdom and practical guidance to families all across America. Right now, you have an extraordinary opportunity to multiply your impact.

Thanks to the historic Dr. James Dobson Memorial Matching Grant, this grant makes it possible for you to have your gift doubled up to \$6 million now through the end of the year, December 31, 2025. This remarkable grant is an incredible memorial and statement of confidence for the only organization entrusted by

Dr. Dobson to expand his work to new generations and geographies. Think about what your double gift will accomplish. A \$50 gift becomes a hundred dollars. A \$500 gift becomes a \$1000. A \$10,000 donation becomes \$20,000. Your generosity will help us continue placing Dr. Dobson's timeless biblical wisdom into the hands and homes of families who desperately need it. Together we are honoring Dr. Dobson's legacy, multiplying the mission, and creating lasting impact for generations to come. To double your gift through the special Memorial Matching grant, visit drjamesdobson.org. Our website is absolutely secure at drjamesdobson.org. If you prefer, you can speak with a member of our customer care team.

Our constituent care team answers the phone at 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Of course, if you prefer, we still love to receive your mail. Your cards and letters sent through the U.S. Postal Service can be addressed to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code, 80949. Again, our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, or you could just write JDFI for short. P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 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 join us again next time as Dr. Dobson continues this important discussion and answers questions from parents about raising boys and healing their wounded spirits. That's coming up right here next time 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.