



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: An Everyday Heroes Discusses Grief, Loss, and Leaving a Dynamic Legacy – Part 2

Guest(s): Dr. Bart Brock

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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 another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the broadcast ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and on today's program we're going to continue with part two of our everyday hero conversation with Dr. Bart Brock, who serves as vice chair of the board of directors here at the JDFI and he's currently interim president of the James Dobson Family Institute as well. On the last edition to Family Talk, Bart shared his journey from corporate America to academia. But on today's program, we're going to hear about his profound experience with grief. After losing his first wife, Mary, following what was supposed to be a routine surgical procedure. Bart has written a book about his journey called *The Widower's Night: A Journey from Death to Life*, which chronicles what he calls guttural grief and the biblical principles that carried him through. Now, if you're walking through the pain of losing a spouse or facing another devastating loss right now, Bart's story offers powerful insights about leaning on Scripture, trusting God's faithfulness, and eventually finding renewal. His testimony reminds us that even in our darkest valleys, God is still writing our story. So let's join Gary Bauer, our senior vice president of public policy here at the JDFI for part two of our conversation with Dr. Bart Brock.

Gary Bauer: Well welcome back to Family Talk. This is our second show with our everyday hero, Bart Brock. We had a great conversation yesterday and I don't want to run out of time again, so let's just dive right into it, Bart.

Dr. Bart Brock: Great.

Gary Bauer: in all of this, Bart, when did you all become aware of Mary's medical issue and then what ended up being the surgery that was supposed to be routine but ended up being a shocking moment.

Dr. Bart Brock: When we learned it was probably about five years prior to that, that she had had rheumatic fever as a child. She didn't even know that she had rheumatic fever. They happened to discover the damage and told her this happened to you when you were a child. And they said, at some time you'll have to have the mitral valve replaced and put in an artificial valve. But it's very common, it's very

routine. It's not time to do it now, we will do it later in time. So we progressed and she had her appointments and we knew that at some point that would happen. But while we were in Wisconsin, and this is the amazing part when I look at it, even though it was a very, very dark time, that two years she only lived two years after we made the change from corporate to academia.

But that two years, I was not flying all over the world. I was at home, I had steady hours, I was home at night. We were able to just be alone together and enjoy each other and it was an incredible period of time. Now I can look back and see some of the weakness that she had that I really didn't realize, and our listeners are going to know that. So many people have lived that when you're living with somebody night and day, you sometimes don't see those things happen. But now I can look back and see it happen. And then there came an urgency during one of her doctor appointments that she needed to have this change to replace, I should say, replacement of the mitral valve and needed to be immediately. So there was no question, there was no time. It must be done immediately.

Gary Bauer: Well, the fact that it came on so suddenly after you thinking both of you thinking for a time that this is something that will be taken, it has to be taken care of, but there's no rush to suddenly there is a rush and then she has the surgery and there were immediate complications, and I'm not going to ask you to go into the details, but it was a very difficult thing to witness the woman you loved all those years needing to go through and you could pray, you could comfort her, but at the end of the day, you're not going to be able to change the situation. You wrote this incredible book that I mentioned, *The Widowers Night: A Journey from Death to Life*. One of the things Bart, and you and I have talked about this a little bit not too long ago, there was this horrible event in Texas with the flooding.

Dr. Bart Brock: Yes.

Gary Bauer: When we lose loved ones, there is a temptation to be angry at God, but one of the things we have to focus on is they are with the Lord and the sufferings ended no more weeping. So she's gone home and it's left to you and us as we lose loved ones to have to process that and deal with that. And your book is the journey of you dealing with that and what you called, the phrase is powerful, guttural grief. So I'd like you to describe what you mean by that, but also was there ever a period here where you were just angry at God that he had taken the woman you love away from you?

Dr. Bart Brock: I didn't experience anger or I don't recall experiencing anger, but that was because again, Dr. Dobson had written a book *When God Doesn't Make Sense*, and he had already taught me those things. So I knew that that was a real danger. So I just chose to look at it. And I remember praying early on, "Lord, I'm not going to ask You why, but I am going to thank You for sharing your treasure because she was Your treasure that You shared with me for this period of time, and now you have taken Your treasure back to Heaven." So she was not mine in

that way. She was Your child, she was Your servant, and she's Your treasure that you shared with me and I wish I had treasured more. You come with lots of regrets and things that you think about, but that helped me a lot.

But this phrase, guttural grief came to me because at this stage of life I had lost, well, Mary and I had lost unborn children, we had lost siblings, we had lost parents, and I really thought I knew what grief was, but I really didn't know this level of grief. And I'm not trying to say that one grief is greater than another grief, but I'm just saying for every person, it might be a grandparent, it might be a friend, it might be a spouse, but whoever has that deep connection with you. And we had that deep connection. And so when it was gone, it was grief like I had never experienced before, and I turned to the Word because that was my only place to go. Now I have to tell you, it took a while. I had to live off of memorized Scriptures for at least six months because I could not read and here I was a professor and I could not read and comprehend a paragraph because it affected my mind so greatly, affected many physical things. And so I realized there are different levels of grief, there really are, and this was one that was beyond anything I had ever experienced.

Gary Bauer: Well, reading the book, I mean I could almost feel it Bart in the written word. And I just think of all the people out there that will greatly benefit having a chance to read this. And at the end of the show we will talk about how people can get the book. But yeah, you were married at an early age and you'd gone through your lives together. You'd made these life-changing decisions. It's understandable. This grief would be more profound than anything you had experienced. Then I couldn't help but think, Barb, when you said you couldn't read because your mind had been so affected. So you had to depend on the memory you had of Bible verses and you had that memory because mom made you go down to the teacher that for that Bible class you miss. So it all does fit together here, Bart.

Dr. Bart Brock: It all fits together. And like I said, God is leading that path even when you don't want Him to lead the path. And oftentimes I'll say, how much more can I depend on him to do it now that I actually want him to lead that path? Gary, you mentioned a few moments ago about for the person that's gone, they're in a much better place, but this time in life really taught me more a different perspective on the 23rd Psalm, and I talk about it a bit in the book, but when David says, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death," and so often we think about that the person that's going into death, but I see it now as the person that's living with the aftermath of death because that shadow lingers. It lingers, and you live in a shadow. And I talk in the book about things as a journey because it is a journey going from death back to life. And it wasn't always easy. There was probably a year and a half that every night I prayed, "Lord, please don't let me wake up." Please don't let me wake up because it was so tough. But every day He did let me wake up.

Gary Bauer: I admire you Bart your open enough to say that your grief was so deep that you literally wanted God to take you off planet earth. A lot of people would be

embarrassed to admit that, but there's nothing embarrassing about it. This is the love of your life and it's much too young. So it had to be an unbelievably trying experience and your heart is in every page of the book. It really is. And actually when I was thinking about it, reading it, I thought it's a good book for a husband and wife to read together while they still can and talk about how they want each other to deal with the grief when one of them goes on to be with the Lord before the other. I'm not sure, I think I might have been with you and Jeanine when you first met each other at another Dobson event, and I think there was a lunch or a dinner and one of our coworkers mentioned that there were a couple of people that had joined us and among them were two people. One had lost a husband and another that had lost a wife and everybody kind of joked about it, oh, well, maybe they'll find each other today. And it ends up that, if I've got that correctly, I think that was the first time you met Jeanine, is that right?

Dr. Bart Brock: Absolutely. And I think back, and I remember that day quite well because there's not many people that can say Dr. Dobson was their matchmaker, but he really was the matchmaker. It was because of his conference. And I remember, well, it was several months, many months later, he finally said, why don't you two just go ahead and get married because it's time now. But the thing Gary that you talked about is that once you have gone through this widow experience, and that was a defined period, and I hated that word. I hated being defined that way, but sooner or later I had to accept it. Once you've gone through that experience, you really know what those vows about till death do us part mean.

You know what that means and it can be very overwhelming to think, am I going to do this again? Because somebody is likely to go first. So one of us, especially with both of us having been widowed before one of us is likely to experience that again. And so that was a big conversation that we had before we made this choice and I'm so glad we did and we're wonderfully happy. I'll talk about Jeanine who I call the Cuban hurricane. And so I went...

Gary Bauer: That is an apt description.

Dr. Bart Brock: I have description for Janine. So it was just amazing because we met at that dinner and how open it had been a shorter time for her than for me and how open she was. And then as we got to know each other and I got to understand her story and her family's story, which is just amazingly incredible that her parents came from Cuba and had to flee Castro back in the late fifties and early sixties.

And the story is just incredible. Now, she was born here, but within a Cuban environment. And so as we went through that process, it revealed again how God works. So when I was in middle school back in the day or junior high, I think it was called back then, in the middle of Georgia, didn't know one Spanish speaking person at that time because those were different days and I was just enamored of the Spanish language. And so I took every course when I finally had

a chance to take Spanish, I took those courses. Later years, I minored in Spanish in university, and then much of my career took place in central and South America when I would travel and work with those countries and so forth. Well, all of a sudden, I'm into a Cuban family.

Gary Bauer: So it all fits together, doesn't it?

Dr. Bart Brock: We got married, everything changes. It all fits together. And Jeanine will tell me, how is it that some little kid in the middle of Georgia that didn't know anybody that spoke Spanish, loved the language, but God does that and we talk about Him giving us the desires of our heart. And the way I really understand that is He gives you the desires that He is going to fulfill. He will give you the right desires. He's not going to give you wrong things that you desire, but He will give you the right desires. And I can't help but go back and remember these are the things that Dr. Dobson taught me on those 30 minute sessions on the radio and so many stories that he brought of other people and how God intervened in their lives and step by step, He guides us like I said, even when I didn't want Him to.

Gary Bauer: Your story is remarkable, and I kind of laugh when I heard you say that Dr. Dobson blessed the marriage, but I recall you saying that even with Father Jim's blessing there, you still as a good man want to meet Janine's parents to get her parents' blessing for your marriage. That's another one of those wonderful traditions that unfortunately has eroded away. And I think for our listeners, you should tell your sons and daughters, you expect your sons, if they find that perfect woman to go meet her parents and ask them for her hand in marriage and for your daughters that you expect if she falls in love with somebody, that man is going to come and talk to her mother and father. I just think it's one of those things that really gets the whole process off to a good start. You're marrying a family, you're part of a family. I wouldn't let somebody take my car out without asking a couple of questions, right? I'm not going to let 'em take my daughter. Well, Bart, I could talk to you all day and I know our listeners could listen all day, but you had this wonderful first marriage with the love of your life, the tragic loss, and then God brings you, Janine. How do you see the future with you and Janine?

Dr. Bart Brock: We used in our wedding a verse, I believe it's Isaiah, where it talks about God giving us beauty for ashes. And I remember the pastor saying, you want this in your wedding? We said, absolutely. Because from this great grief, Ezekiel prophesied to the dry bones. God said, can these dry bones live? And not only could they live, but they could flourish, and that's what we're so excited about in our marriage is we know that time of grief. I never want to experience that of course again, but that time what I can tell you is He was faithful. It wasn't easy, it wasn't pretty and it hurt deeply, but I know He is faithful no matter what the future holds. And so we look forward to our future together about what is God going to do next.

Gary Bauer: Bart, quite frankly, I do not know how people that don't have a foundational belief in the Creator, I don't know how they deal with grief that comes into all of

our lives and tragedy and all the rest of it. It's a world with a lot of things, and the only thing that you can look forward to is eternal life in the world that has been prepared for us when this one is over. As we wrap up, once again, you're doing so much for this ministry. I've often thought if we get to Heaven and somebody says, okay, everybody that's been affected by James Dobson and his ministries, please get into that line. That multitude is going to be unbelievable. And I know you feel that this great ministry and his work over the years has a great future, which is why you've been willing to devote so much time and energy to making sure that we preserve this legacy and help him as he continues to do the work that he loves. How do you see that future? Because we've got a lot of people listening. They're part of our family and they're loyal supporters, and we need him today just as we always have.

Dr. Bart Brock:

And Gary, it is such an honor and I don't say that flippantly. It truly is an honor and anything I can do working night and day pales in comparison to the work that has already been done by this ministry, but I really do believe in this what I call a dynamic legacy. It's living. It doesn't end because I see so many people. There are more people today went through that are going through experiences like I lived. It was relatively rare in that time. Now it's the norm and the hurts and the pains and the wounds are becoming the norm. And if people don't know they have a way, how can they hear, right, unless the gospel is preached? And the thing about this ministry is it comes into the heart and it takes those biblical principles and it's not using them to condemn people because we know Jesus didn't come to condemn people. He came to save people and He came and loved them so much that He wrapped himself in flesh. He constrained himself to live a life like we live, and then allowed that life to be sacrificed so that we could be reconciled with Him. Now we have to come to Him and we have to accept it.

He's already done that work. The thing that I love is the work of Dr. Dobson always emphasizes that, and it makes it accessible to people. It makes it accessible in a way that they can see it in their daily life. It's not just a sermon on Sunday. It's not just going to church; it's not sitting in a pew. I did all of that in my early life and it gave me a great foundation, but it was not enough. When reality hit, it wasn't enough. I needed someone to teach me what it meant to live biblically. And as Dr. Dobson did that anecdote by anecdote, story by story, it gradually became part of who I am. And I just want to ensure that that resource, that wisdom, that ministry is out there for as many people as we can possibly touch.

Gary Bauer:

Well beautifully said, Bart, and that's what our team is dedicated to, and we're grateful that we've been blessed with having somebody come alongside that has the skills that you do can make tough decisions and wise decisions. And we all believe that great days are ahead for the James Dobson Family Institute and Dr. Dobson and Shirley's legacy. It's been great to spend this time with you, Bart. I think you've made a lot of new friends for the ministry. I'm looking forward to the feedback we're going to get. Folks, thanks for being here with Family Talk. Tune in every chance you get. We've got a lot of great shows

coming up. We think our every day is a great show, but our regular shows and then these Everyday Heroes series, we're getting great feedback about them and we hope you'll join us to hear great stories about how God has used followers of Him to make a difference in our world. God bless you all. We'll see you again soon.

Roger Marsh:

From the depths of grief to finding beauty in the ashes, Dr. Bart Brock's journey reminds us that God is always faithful. Friend, you've been listening to a special edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and a conversation featuring Dr. Bart Brock, who's our vice chairman of our board of directors here at JDFI, and also the interim president of the James Dobson Family Institute. Now, if you missed any part of this two day discussion featuring this everyday hero, or if you'd like to share it with someone else who might be walking through grief right now, go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And when you go online, remember, you can also find information about Dr. Bart Brock's book called *The Widower's Night: A Journey From Death to Life*. Again, you'll find information about Bart's book and also the program you just heard when you go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

In these final moments, I'd like to thank everyone who has been supporting the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Not only this year, but for our entire 15 year history. When you support the ministry of the JDFI, you help preserve and promote biblical principles that strengthen marriages and families all across America. Your generosity enables us to reach millions through radio broadcasts, articles, videos, and other resources that provide hope and practical guidance when families need it most. You can partner with us in this mission when you give a gift online at drjamesdobson.org. You can also make your contribution over the phone when you call 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh and on behalf of Dr. James Dobson and all of us here at Family Talk, thanks so much for joining us today. We hope you'll tune in again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust, for the family you love.

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