



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Seeing God in Space: Serving Him on Capitol Hill – Part 2

Guest(s): Marc Johansen

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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 back to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Have you ever wondered what it's like to be a Christian in Washington, D.C.? To work in the corridors of power while staying true to your faith? Well on the last edition of Family Talk, we met Marc Johansen, whose decades in military service took him from the Air Force Academy to the Pentagon but his real story isn't about his impressive career. It's about bringing Jesus into every room he entered even if that meant standing alone. On today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, Gary Bauer our senior vice president of public policy here at the JDFI will continue his conversation with Marc Johansen, and Marc's going to share about meeting his wife, Sherry, at a wedding reception with possibly the worst opening line you've ever heard. This is going to be great. And yet, God used that awkward moment to launch what became a 45 year marriage that would inspire everyone around them. You'll also hear how they navigated seasons of heartbreak together, always keeping their faith at the center. Marc and Sherry's story is a beautiful reminder of God's faithfulness through every season of life. So now let's rejoin Gary Bauer and Marc Johansen on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Gary Bauer: Well, Marc, here we are for day two of telling your great story of service in government and incredible positions, but also your service to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So we're glad you could be here again today.

Marc Johansen: Well, amen. I'm glad to be here as well, and especially to talk about the pleasure, privilege of serving the Lord within government. And so I think we got some interesting stories to talk about.

Gary Bauer: No question about it. So let's get right into it.

Marc Johansen: Yes, sir.

Gary Bauer: So is my recollection correct that at the Air Force Academy, is that when you first met your lovely wife?

Marc Johansen: No, actually not. I am glad I didn't meet her while I was going to the academy because one of the things she told me later after, well, after we got engaged, I had no interest in cadets. I wanted nothing to do with the military. I mean, it was like love and marriage snuck up on us because we both thought, well, we're dating and she's not interested in the military person and I'm not sure I want to get married yet. And so the Lord had other plans for us.

Gary Bauer: Well, tell us about that because it was at a wedding reception, right? Yes,

Marc Johansen: It was. Yeah, it was something else. So I had returned from Thule Greenland, spending a year up there on remote. And once again, that's a big radar that looks at what China and Russia are doing, any kind of launches coming over and their satellite systems. So I came back and in fact, I told Sherry later as a joke, I said, "I was determined that the first woman I saw after I stepped off the airplane, I was going to marry her. See, there's no women in Thule." I said, "No, come on, come on." So another miracle that the Lord provided, and that was that I ran into a retired colonel who had flown from my dad, Joe Guines was his name, wonderful, wonderful person. I just happened to run into him there in Colorado Springs and he said, "Why don't you come to my wedding reception?" And I said, "What?" And he said, "Yeah, I'm getting married again," because he lost his wife probably five, six years before.

And he said, "I'm marrying a lady who lost her husband." And I said, "Okay, fine." And then he went on to say, "Oh yeah, there's going to be some lovely ladies there." So I said, "Well, I'll be there."

Gary Bauer: I was going to say, you knew exactly what they're telling you to get you to the wedding reception.

Marc Johansen: Well, if you think about it, where do you meet people that tend to be somebody decent to meet? And a wedding reception would be one of those normally. So I went to the wedding reception and I'm kind of hanging with Joe. We're talking and I'm standing by him and I'm looking around the room and I saw this gorgeous blonde angel with a blue dress on, blue eyes. I'm thinking, oh my gosh, how do I get to meet her? How do I get to meet her? And as I told you, I was a bit of an introvert.

I could turn on the extrovert if I had to. So I'm thinking, how do I get to meet her? How do I talk to her? How do I approach her? And the next thing I know is she's coming straight across the room, heading towards Joe and myself, because I'm maybe five, six feet from him. She comes right up to Joe and she says, "Joe, who does this man belong to?" And I thought, did I hear that right? And fortunately, my brain worked quickly. And I said, "Well, it could be you if you play your cards right."

Gary Bauer: Now Marc, if you would've run that by me before you said it, I could have told you that was not the right of prayer.

Marc Johansen: Well, you knew Sherry. And so she looked at me with a withering glance and I'm thinking, "Oh, I blew this. I'm trying to be cute or funny." And as you may recall, she's pretty strong-willed. So she gives me the withering glance and then goes back to her friends. And then it occurred to me that this was kind of an innocent question. Was I part of the brides party or was I part of the grooms party? And she told me later that that was why she asked it because all of her friends were saying, "Who's that guy? Who's that guy? We've never seen him before. Where does he fit in?" And then she being kind of the leader, "Oh, I'll find out."

Gary Bauer: So how long was it from that rather unusual first exchange to when you were having your own wedding reception?

Marc Johansen: It was a year. It was about a year. Just a year. Yeah, we did it a year because she was kind of standoffish at ... When I finally got her phone number, she gave me her work number, and she's working in the courthouse. So I'm calling and she was getting ready to go to law school. She had done her master's. And the first thing that we did, and I think this is so important, is after she said yes, we both got down on our knees and we prayed to the Lord. And we said, "God, we don't know what we're doing. This marriage is in your hands. Our lives are in your hands. We want to follow you. Please, please guide us in everything that we do."

Gary Bauer: Marc, so many marriages today, God is nowhere in the ceremony. I mean, it's really amazing.

Marc Johansen: Isn't that sad?

Gary Bauer: It is because in every wedding that is really a wedding, there are three entities involved, a man, a woman, and God that is overlooking this covenant between them and that their marriage ought to depend on. And the fact that that doesn't happen these days is, I think, another indication of how deep the trouble is that the country has.

Marc Johansen: Oh, amen. Amen. And I mean, that's what you and Dr. Dobson have focused on for years, is the strength of the family is the underlying strength of our nation, of the world.

Gary Bauer: So you're starting out, and isn't this around the time then that Dr. Dobson-

Marc Johansen: Absolutely.

Gary Bauer: ... comes into your lives?

Marc Johansen: And you too, pretty much, close.

Gary Bauer: Well, let's just keep it on Dobson.

Marc Johansen: Yes, because this is '79. We're just married, and then we get our roots ripped up because we're sent to Omaha, Nebraska, and especially Sherry, because she had her mom and her sisters were in Colorado, and here she was important in the courthouse, and now she's a military wife, and we're going out into the midst of Nebraska. Nothing against Nebraska, but she wasn't prepared for that. But it turned out to be a great blessing. Once again, the Lord provided ... It was the time that we were refined in the fire as a young married couple because I was thrown into a new job. The main thing there was I was put on the inspector general team and we were traveling every other week for maybe two weeks. So I was gone two thirds of the time. I'd be in Turkey, in Greece, you name it. We were going all over the place. And it was the Strategic Air Command Inspector General. So we were doing the Northern Tier, the missile folks in North Dakota, et cetera, and then overseas with the space folks. And the first thing I found out was these men, when we get on this C-141 and fly overseas, they don't seem to have the same perspective I do on marriage or walk with the Lord. They're taking their wedding rings off. The first thing I want to do is find the nearest bar and where they can chase women when we land.

And I decided right there and when I needed to be careful because I didn't want to be cocooned off as this radical Christian goody two shoes. So I always tried to walk with them. We'd go to the bar and I'd spend maybe 30, 45 minutes when they started losing it, I'd get out of there. And then for example, at Athens, I loved it because I went up to the Parthenon and then I went on Paul's Trail to Mars Hill and the Areopagus. And it was interesting because slowly but surely, some of these other men started following me and saying, "Oh, you seem to know your history." Could you take us along too? And so I could preach to them and they didn't even know it. I'd say, "You know, the Apostle Paul stood right here." He's talking about the unknown God and he's talking to these folks that knew Socrates and Aristotle and all of this great philosophy. And then he's telling them, "Hey, you're a bit wrong here. Let me tell you about the true God." The one true one. There's one and it ain't Zeus.

Gary Bauer: Yeah. So often the best presentation of the gospel is just letting people see us live our lives, right? And that's what you were doing.

Marc Johansen: Yes, it is.

Gary Bauer: That's what you were doing.

Marc Johansen: But I tried, like I said, it was a balance because I knew that if I went too far in rejecting them, let's say, pointing the finger and saying, what the ... If they asked me, I would tell them why I didn't think it was a good idea. But slowly but surely these folks started coming to me and asking me advice and they'd sharing situations with their marriages and their kids. And I mean, I became kind of the traveling chaplain for that group. And I mean, that was great. And Sherry was in the same situation. The men would leave and the women would all get together and say, "Oh, let's go to this bar. Let's go dancing. Let's do this or that." And they took their wedding rings off. I thought, "Wow, isn't this something?"

Gary Bauer: Wow.

Marc Johansen: Both sides are doing their thing. And then Sherry, like I did, tried to hang in for a little bit and then she would leave when it started getting a little untoward. But the women started coming to her because they admired the marriage that we had and they started talking to her and she got to bring them to the chapel and just feed into their lives. And it was a time of growth for us, for our marriage and for us to stand strong with the challenge.

Gary Bauer: Did Sherry start listening to Dr. Dobson on the radio?

Marc Johansen: Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. Let me get back to Dr. Dobson.

Gary Bauer: Yes. You remember him? Our founder.

Marc Johansen: I'm sorry. I went down a little bit down the rabbit hole, but it certainly feeds back into Dr. Dobson because we didn't have this wisdom naturally. And what we're talking to these wives and husbands are things that we're hearing from Dr. Dobson. We're applying it to our lives together as married. And then we're sharing it with these men and women.

Gary Bauer: There's so much more we could talk about about your government service and you've served a number of presidents and so forth, but I want to be sure we have time to deal with the fact that you and Sherry found each other, you're each the love of your lives and you were together for 45 years.

Marc Johansen: Absolutely.

Gary Bauer: But an event happens fairly early on. Her illness, tell us what happened and-

Marc Johansen: Sure. The last 20 years before she passed, she got breast cancer and then it would go into remission and then it would move and pop out again after about five years. And so we went through four bouts of five years and we had three chemo and four radiation and she had stuff cut off of her losing body parts as we were going through this. And through it all, she was focused. She taught this class for 25 plus years at our church and it became the largest women's class there, 85 women usually as an average. And she's putting her life into that. I mean, every day I'd get up, she would be already in the Word. I mean, she worked really hard on teaching and she wanted to impart the Word the best way she could. And she was very talented at that. And this class was tremendous.

She'd pick out ladies and I got all kinds of cards from ladies all over the world actually, because there are a lot of military families and they went through her class at some point and they remembered her and then they heard about her passing. And I got the sweetest note saying, Sharon didn't just teach. I mean, she was a wonderful teacher, but she put into our lives. And this is what she did

for me and my husband and me and my kids. And she would come over and I felt like her focus was on me, on me. And she'd find out what was going on and she'd pour her life into mine. And I mean, all of them had kind of the same theme of what she did.

Gary Bauer: That's amazing that she's having to struggle in her own life and yet she's pouring herself out to help the lives of others.

Marc Johansen: That was number one. I actually was number two there because it was serve God and these ladies. That's the number one thing I want to do. And then I get to my family and that's right, because God's first. And she felt that the way she was serving God was with those ladies, that flock. And another lady wrote and said she was so good at figuring out our capabilities and our talents and pulling them out of us because this lady said, "I was always scared to speak and I was always scared to tell people what to do." And she said, "So Sherry came over one day and said, I want you to be the table leader for these 10 people. " And she said back to Sherry, "I can't do that. I can't do that. " And Sherry said, "Yes, you can." I said, "And we're going to work together and you're going to do it." And then the lady turned into a great leader and she just said, "I'm so grateful because I didn't see that in myself." And she did. She saw it.

Gary Bauer: So Marc, I know obviously she was being treated and of course you all are faithfully praying. During these periods of remission, did you have a reasonable expectation that maybe the battle had been won, right? Yes,

Marc Johansen: Yes. In fact, I believed till the last minute, I mean, that she passed that the Lord was going to provide a miracle. And I prayed that way. I said, "Lord, I know we're going through this, but I also know that you provide miraculous healing."

Gary Bauer: Yes.

Marc Johansen: And I said, "I'm praying that that's what you'll decide to do. " And she was that way too. It was kind of a sine wave. We'd go up and she was better and then all of a sudden we'd come down in the valley and she could hardly walk and then we'd go up again. And Michelle was a great blessing because as a doctor, she really held ... I mean, she was right there with her mom and she helped me a lot in the hospital. It's amazing. I didn't write this down, but this is ... It's amazing how quickly they're ready to say, "Go home and die." And we were in a good hospital, but it seems like they're ready to give up. And as a Christian, you don't give up. You don't give up until the Lord says, "Okay, it's your time." And you go, "Yes, sir. We're ready." But they're ready to throw you under the bus in some ways."

Gary Bauer: So you had the one daughter and now you've got a granddaughter.

Marc Johansen: Yes, absolutely.

Gary Bauer: And does she share part of your wife's name or am I-

Marc Johansen: Yeah, absolutely. It's Eve Sherry. So Sherry is her middle name. I lost Sherry and of course the first part of that ... And I still cry. I think I cry every day at some point. I think of something. I see something.

Gary Bauer: Yes.

Marc Johansen: I watch a romantic movie and I think of when we had a situation similar and-

Gary Bauer: And of course, our president, Bart Brock, lost his wife and tells...

Marc Johansen: I read his pamphlet.

Gary Bauer: Which is beautiful. Isn't it?

Marc Johansen: It is and his situation definitely was a bit different but there was a lot of gems in there that really applied to me and it helped me come to the point, and I will get to a detail here if you want to hear it, but come to the point where I started saying, "God, thank you for 45 wonderful years." Reading Bart's pamphlet as you brought up and what he went through, I saw a lot of things in there and it turned me around. Every morning I get up, as soon as my feet hit the floor, I thank God. I thank God for the 45 years. I thank God for Sherry. I thank God for the marriage that we had and being man and wife and also parents to Michelle and what a wonderful, wonderful situation it was. I mean, it wasn't perfect. Yeah, we had some pretty good knockdown arguments occasionally.

Gary Bauer: Look, anybody that says they don't, they're lying because we're human beings, right?

Marc Johansen: Yeah. Yeah. But I usually realize that she was right when we had the arguments. And I say, later I'd have to come back and say, "You were right."

Gary Bauer: I don't know, Marc. Now you're setting back the cause of man. I think that could be edited out there. I don't know. Well, as we're getting close to the end of our two days together, was there something else you wanted to share? You mentioned a detail that you wanted-

Marc Johansen: Sure. The Lord has spoken to me directly, and maybe speaking is not the right word because I know that some pastors would say, "What are you talking about? This doesn't happen." But I got to share it from my heart. Has spoken to me directly three times in my life, and it's not been him speaking to me like Noah, but He showed me, He gave me a dream, something rolled across the road, which was a certain color, which indicated you need to go to this school because it was the school colors. I mean, can you believe that? We're trying to decide on the school and this ball comes rolling across the road and it's the school colors and they're unusual. And I said, "Oh, well, I guess you're supposed

to go to that school, hon." But anyway, so the Lord gave me this dream that was incredible because I'm missing, and this feeds into how I came to the point of saying, "God, thank you. Thank you for Sherry. Thank you for 45 years. I'm grateful for that. " And move a bit on from my ... I mean, why? Why did I lose her? And it was a clear as a bell. I remember every stitch of it, it was like watching a high definition movie. I'm on a train. I'm on a steam engine, one of those old coal fired trains. And I used to do HO Gage, so maybe that's why it was a steam engine. I don't know.

Gary Bauer: I used to collect trains two years ago.

Marc Johansen: Okay. There you go. And so a beautiful train. And I'm in this beautiful car as if a high class person would own this car from the railroad baron type stays and I'm alone. I'm all alone. Nobody else is in there, but I feel peace. And I don't know why because I have this unusual situation where I'm feeling what I feel in the car and I'm up above watching this. So I've got two minds at the same time. It's hard to explain. But I have a bunch of luggage in the overhead. So the train's going on. I'm looking at the window. It's gorgeous. It's Rocky Mountain, essentially streams and just beautiful, beautiful Colorado type scenery and it slows down and I have no clue where I'm at or where I'm going. And so I gather my luggage and it's kind of unwieldy. And so I step down through the door of the car and then I'm down on the ground and I'm still looking down because I'm trying not to drop my luggage. So I really haven't looked up or around.

And I'm looking down and I see the two feet and they're just brilliant. I mean, they're shining. It's just unbelievably brilliant. And I drop my luggage and I look up and I'm looking at this person that is, the face is just unbelievable. And to this day, that's the Lord.

Gary Bauer: Yes.

Marc Johansen: And He says in this voice, which is just peaceful, authoritative, it's the most beautiful voice you've ever heard, and it just gives me absolute peace. I mean, I'm not worried at all. And He says, "You don't really need that stuff here." I'm looking down at my luggage. So I go, "Oh." And then I look around and here's this beautiful crystal clear lake and I look across to the other shore and there's people as far as the eye can see and then right in the front is Sherry. I'm sorry.

Gary Bauer: No, there's nothing I'm sorry about, Marc.

Marc Johansen: And she's jumping up and down. She's got this huge smile and she's saying, "Oh hon, oh hon, it's so good to see you." And then that was the end of the dream. And after that, I just said, "Thank you, God." You gave me a good input on that.

Gary Bauer: That's a beautiful story, Marc. Thank you for sharing that with us. And that's what we've been promised. You were at Dr. Dobson's memorial service and-

Marc Johansen: Yes, absolutely. And thank you for your leadership there too.

Gary Bauer: Well, you're welcome. But a number of us pointed out that to Dr. Dobson's family, you'll see him again, and we will see our loved ones again. I mean, the Scripture's very clear about that.

Marc Johansen: Amen. Thank God. Thank God.

Gary Bauer: Well, Marc, you have fought the good fight. You've finished the race in many ways. You've never abandoned your faith. God put you..

Marc Johansen: Now don't say I finished the race. I'm still running. I'm still running.

Gary Bauer: What I mean is we're near the end of two shows, Marc.

Marc Johansen: Oh, got it. Got it. That race. Okay. Yeah.

Gary Bauer: But God has put you in a number of very important places and you've always brought the cross of Jesus with you when you've been in those places. We deeply appreciate your partnership and support for the James Dobson Family Institute over the years. And you've supported my work with the groups I have here in Washington, D.C. And so you are to us definitely an everyday hero, although we don't run across people like you every day. And so we're so glad to be able to spend some time these last two days for you to share your story with us and to tell us about your lovely wife and so that I think people will feel like they know her. So thank you, Marc. We appreciate it.

Marc Johansen: No, thank you, Gary. Thank you for all that you've done in the same place that you've always stood for integrity and for the Lord. Thank you so much for your leadership.

Gary Bauer: Thank you.

Roger Marsh: On today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we heard part two of Gary Bauer's conversation with Marc Johansen, an everyday hero in every sense of the word, who's been sharing his testimony about seeing God in space and serving him on Capitol Hill. If you'd like to hear today's program again or go back and listen to part one as well, you'll find parts one and two at jdfi.net. Well, during the past half hour, we've heard about Marc and Sherry Johansen's 45-year marriage, and it didn't just happen by accident. It took commitment, faith, and understanding. And that's why I want to share with you about a free resource that Dr. Dobson prepared for couples to help them strengthen marriages. It's called "The Undeniable Differences Between Husbands and Wives." Drawing from Dr. Dobson's decades of research and counseling, this digital guide explores why men and women approach life so differently.

You'll discover practical insights about communication, expectations, and what makes your spouse tick. Best of all, understanding these differences can help you appreciate each other rather than simply tolerating the differences. Now, you can download this free resource when you go to jdfi.net and search for that title, "The Undeniable Differences Between Husbands and Wives." Again, it's a free download available to you exclusively at jdfi.net. Every day at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we're reaching families who need biblical wisdom for their marriages, their parenting and their faith, and your gift of any amount directly supports these broadcasts and helps us continue sharing life-changing biblical truth with families who need it most. To make a secure donation, go to jdfi.net. That's jdfi.net.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh and from all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you can still trust for the family you love.

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