



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** No More Secrets – Part 2

**Guest(s):** Dennis Swanberg

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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: Welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and during the next half hour, we'll be concluding Dr. Dobson's powerful conversation with Dennis Swanberg about his book called *No More Secrets*. On the last edition of Family Talk, Dennis courageously shared about his son's battle with alcoholism and the painful journey their family walked together. He admitted how difficult it was to be vulnerable about their struggles fearing judgment from others. On today's Family Talk broadcast, Dr. Dobson and Dr. Swanberg will dive deeper into why keeping secrets can be so damaging to our spiritual and emotional health. They'll also discuss why finding a trusted confidant can be life-changing and how God's redemptive grace covers even our deepest regrets. Dr. Dennis Swanberg is a popular Christian comedian, a motivational speaker, an ordained minister and author who travels the country speaking to hundreds of thousands of people every year. His unique blend of humor and heartfelt wisdom has made him one of our most requested guests, by the way. So whether you're struggling with your own secrets or perhaps supporting someone who is today's conversation offers practical biblical wisdom for the journey toward freedom and healing. Here now is Dr. James Dobson and his guest, Dr. Dennis Swanberg, on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dennis Swanberg: One Christmas some years ago, a little bit before 2012, we were all at this lake place, our whole family, and one day her mom comes up to me on a little path outside of a cottage. I get up early, I'm having my coffee. Well, there's Kathy. And so Kathy comes up to me and Kathy said, "Dennis, I want to talk to you. I've never told anybody this, but I feel like I need to tell you. I was raised in Mississippi. My mother died when I was five. I was the last of 13 children. My dad was older when I was born and he was soon out of the question. I was desperate and I married a man and was pregnant and then he didn't want me and they didn't want the baby. So when I went to one of my older brothers, he gave me a \$50 bill and said, 'Go find yourself a doctor and fix this thing.' She said, when I was 17 years old, I had an abortion."

Dr. James Dobson: That was illegal at that time.

Dennis Swanberg: And I'm just not ready for that. And here I've been married to her daughter for years and years and years and I said, sometimes you got to stop and say, Lord, help me because the next few words I say they will remember forever. We need to remember that with our kids and our grandkids, our loved ones, our friends. So I paused and I took a breath because I'm always such a talker and I said, "Kathy, I love you more now than I've ever loved you before and we love you. You're a good woman, you're a good lady, you're a good wife, you're a good mother." It wasn't but some days after that that she had just a mental breakdown and was never the same after that. In the book, I share that at the very end when she was just lingering for days and days and no one knew why she was lingering and the family all looked at me and said, you need to go and talk to my mom. So I went inside just me and Kathy, a very private place and only share this because Lauree's entire family encouraged me to, but at that time I was able to communicate basically I won't share everything, but I said, "You've been good to us. We love you. You're a good godly woman and Jesus is ready for you in Heaven and your child is waiting on you ready to hug you, and he or she's going to tell you all that they've been doing in Heaven, which is not a boring place. So you can go if you want to go, we love you." So I went outside, I got the family, we came in, we all held hands around her and sang Amazing Grace and she went to be with Jesus.

Never had an experience like that before, but I think Kathy wanted her story out there because I thought, man, if she had been to a place where someone could have sat down with her and said, Hey, I remember when I was 17 or if she could have been part of a ministry to help some young girl say, Hey, well, lemme tell you my story when I was 17, but no one wanted to tell secrets. Secrets make you sick. Silence is the enemy of healing and that's what made her sick and we loved her and we still love her. And her husband George, he came out of the war, World War II and he married her and he knew and he loved her, had two girls and two boys and a great family, a great testimony, but I've thought about her sometimes when she held that secret in. What about when she's at the beauty shop and someone says the beauty shop. How could anybody kill a baby? How could anybody abort a baby? What about when on church, on Right to Life Sunday? She just sits there and I thought if she had just opened up and shared it, she had a cathartic experience for sure, a cleansing and she could say, "Yes, that happened, but God is good and God loves us and God forgives us and God takes care of us."

Dr. James Dobson: I wonder if anybody ever told her that there's no sin that Jesus can't forgive or cover.

Dennis Swanberg: I'm sure she heard that from the pulpit, but I guess that's one she didn't want to tell. It's like my grandpa. Elof Swanberg when he came from Sweden. He was an orphan, he and his sister and came over on the Lusitania in 1912. He was 14. He lived with a rancher in Texas for 10 years to start to pay him back. He lost his arm when he was 49 in a cotton gin accident. So he farmed with one arm until he was 77. He just had a tough old life all the time. I used to say, "Grandpa,

what happened back in Sweden when you were a child with all this, your parents died or whatever,” and he would just say, “Why talk about something horrible?” I said, “Well, I just sort of want to know.” Grandpa never would tell us. Well, after he passed, my older sister, she did research and we checked with folks in Sweden and the church there was in the habit of placing a mark by your name, your birth certificate if you are an illegitimate child. And he knew that and was ashamed of it. Now, doc, I don't know why people use that word. If you're here, you're legit. But he had to live with it and he never would tell us. But here's another thing I've often thought, man, if Grandpa Elof would've told me I'd have just loved him more, I'd loved on him, he wouldn't have had to hold that in.

Dr. James Dobson: He never did reveal it.

Dennis Swanberg: Never did tell us, never did reveal that. And we always wondered, something happened back there. What happened? I've talked with friends and ministries about getting a hole in the heart when you're fatherless, when you don't have a dad or...it is like a hole in your heart and hard to heal. My mom, Pauline Bernadine, she's 90, she's read. She said, “I read the book two times and I don't know if I'd have told everything.” I said, “Well, mom, I said, we sort of share it all.” “I know, my gosh.” But here's the deal, doc. I have to realize, and Lauree and Chad and Dusty and Brittany and all of us, little AJ and our future grandkids is that there's more secrets today and more secrets tomorrow. And just because I wrote a book on no more secrets, doesn't mean all secrets are gone. Things happen. It's so good if we have someone to go to, I'm glad we can go to our Lord Jesus at any time, night or day. The Catholics have a little something on us about confession. We need to confess that our sins may be forgiven, that we may be healed.

We surely we tell the Lord, but when you have a confidant, someone who can keep their mouth shut at the right time at the right place in your life and you wonder, when do I tell it? God will give you the time. God will reveal to you. I had a dear friend put this in the book. He asked my friend this question, what is the worst thing I could know about you? That's pretty heavy, isn't it? What is the worst thing I can know about you? Lemme tell you something. The Lord knows all about us and when you have a friend that you can open, confess and help and work through accountability, friend to pray with you, work with you to be released of all that stuff, I guarantee you Satan wants to stink it up and he wants us to be down and he wants us to be useless, but we need to be liberated.

Dr. James Dobson: I only got your book today. You brought it with you. You didn't send me one so I could read it before you got here, but I wonder if you also said in this book, share your secrets, but be careful who you share them with.

Dennis Swanberg: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: You share them with someone who isn't mature enough to keep them quiet or to condemn you for it when you've already confessed it to the Lord. You have to be really careful with that, especially within in a church setting.

Dennis Swanberg: You have to watch people. It takes time before you'll know. Like this friend of mine when he asked that question, what's the worst thing in your life? He felt safe to tell him, and that was the changing moment of his life.

His ministry is huge, but you have to have that confidentiality.

Dr. James Dobson: There it is because for some people I would say it's none of your business.

Dennis Swanberg: Here's one doc. Jesus had to be careful about even the inner circle of three and the disciples, but there was one guy, Lazarus, we don't have one word in the Bible from Lazarus, couldn't get a word in edgewise between his two sisters, but Bible says they all knew Jesus loved him. You know why I think He loved him? He could keep his mouth shut. When he was about to raise him from the dead, He asked people to roll the stone. They had to do something and when he came out, he asked them, you take off those stinking dirty linens carefully, be tender. Some tradition say that Lazarus lived another 30 years. The Bible says many people came to Jesus because of Lazarus. I think Lazarus may have been his best friend, and I think there was probably a day when Lazarus looked at Martha. She was probably still alive, then sort of bossy. He said, Martha, I'm about to go get out the grave clothes. And she did. And then she probably looked at him and she said, well, here they are and I've washed 'em a hundred times, but they still stinketh.

Well, that's all right. Put 'em on. And he had to put 'em on because he did die. Here's the difference and here's the hope for all of us. When Jesus was resurrected, He took His grave clothes and He folded them neatly and he never ever put them on again. He's our hope. He's the answer. We go boldly to His throne of grace to find help in time of need, and you're never more like Jesus, I think and like God than when you care and you're loving and you're confidential and you can listen to someone share their heart, my friend, if you can't keep your mouth shut, I feel sorry for you. Cleanse yourself today. Ask forgiveness for today and be a friend and be confidential. We have to be careful, doc, like you said, I don't want to cast my pearls before swine and have 'em trampled over. I have trusted friends and I have some, I'm their trusted friend, but if I ever give that up, woe is me. We have that in the Bible. No more secrets. You got to be careful who you talk to.

Dr. James Dobson: And the ultimate source is Jesus. You remember an old hymn that says, there is no other trusted friend or brother. Tell it to Jesus alone. Do you remember that song?

Dennis Swanberg: That is an awesome, awesome song. Here's one I put in the book because I loved it so much. I'm going to get it out here so I'll make sure I get it all right.

Stuart Hamlin was a great cowboy and he was in a Billy Graham crusade. Can you imagine what that must in Los Angeles? John Wayne saw him at a party and he said, "Listen, Stuart heard you into that Billy Graham meeting," and Stuart Hamlin answered John Wayne said, "Well, duke, it's no secret what God can do." There it was. And then the Duke said, "It sounds like a song, Stuart." So Stuart Hamlin went home. He sat down in his kitchen next to his grandfather clock and he started writing "The chimes of time ring out the news. Another day is through. Someone slipped and someone slipped and fell. Was that someone you? You may have long for added strength, your courage to renew. Do not be disheartened for I have good news for you. It is no secret what God can do, what He's done for others, He'll do for you. With arms wide open. He'll pardon you. It is no secret what God can do. There is no night for in His light. You never walk alone. Always feel at home wherever you may go. There is no power, can conquer you while God is on your side. Take Him at His promise and don't run and don't hide.

When we were at the National Day of Prayer, Ms. Shirley, she headed that thing up for 25 years and you were along her side. That's the quietest I think doc's ever been for 25 years at the National Day of Prayer because Ms. Shirley, she's the president. But when we were there with y'all for that last year, my little wife is so quiet, doesn't say much about nothing. She went up to y'all and told you some of the stuff. And she came back over to me and I said, "Did you tell them anything?" She said, "Yeah, I told 'em most everything." "Oh, you told Dr. Dobson and Ms. Shirley?"

Dr. James Dobson: She stood right face to face with me.

Dennis Swanberg: And she said, "Yes, I did." And I went, "Okie dokie." The old flesh wonders. I wonder if he'll ever let me speak for him again. Well, you know what? The proof's in the pudding. I'm here right now with you and Ms. Shirley, thank you for being a confidant.

Dr. James Dobson: She gave you the title for this book, *No More Secrets*.

Dennis Swanberg: Gave the title. She said, "I'm tired of it. I'm tired of it with my family, your family, our family." I wanted to quit writing it. I was right in the middle of it. I said, "It's getting worse. I need to quit. I don't even need to write this book." She said, "You're writing it." And she said, "I'm tired of it. No more secrets." And when she said that, I said, that's what we'll call the book, baby. No More Secrets. Tim Clinton is a good friend of both of ours. Tim wrote the forward for my book and he said, this is a little something. He said, "You need this book. It's time to get beyond the past, the pain and the secrets." And that's what we want for people. We want people to be liberated. I want 'em to laugh again. I want your loved ones to come to the reunion. I don't want 'em to have to dodge Christmas or Thanksgiving. I want 'em to come in with their head held high. I want 'em to have a good time. Oh, there might be someone in the crowd going "Goodnight, there's their boy. They've had a lot of trouble with him." Or,

“Oh, there’s their daughter.” Well, don't worry about them. You come in with your head held high because Jesus loves you.

Dr. James Dobson: A lot of those hidden secrets come out of childhood. It’s the thing you're embarrassed about from your childhood and Shirley’s sitting here right now, I hope she won't mind my saying this, but her father was an alcoholic and she was embarrassed by that. And when somebody would bring her home, she would ask them to let her off a block away so people would not know where she'd lived.

Dennis Swanberg: Bless her.

Dr. James Dobson: And when we first started going together, we'd gone together through the summer and sitting one night talking and she told me about her childhood and she thought I would walk away. She thought that I wouldn't care. And I said to her a little bit later that it is my desire in life to make up to you for what you have lost and what you missed. And I've been working on that ever since. Instead of rejecting her, that made me love her and want to be tender to her and to take care of her. And if you choose the right person, there is freedom in what you're talking about.

Dennis Swanberg: There is, but I want y'all to listen to me, men. Most the time there's not anyone like your wife that has your back and my wife has my back. And there's been times when I've opened up with her on my knees, tears rolling down my cheeks, and she's been gracious to me. As gracious as she's been to her mother and gracious, she's been to my boys.

Dr. James Dobson: She's a great lady. She really is.

Dennis Swanberg: I just remind her, I said, “Baby, make sure you're gracious to yourself because you've been gracious to all of us.”

Dr. James Dobson: I want you to describe for me in these closing minutes who you had in mind when you wrote this. Whenever I write a book, I've got somebody in mind. You had someone in mind here.

Dennis Swanberg: My focus probably is that mom and dad, that grandma and grandpa. What did we do? What did we not do? For them to know and to understand that God loves them and He loves their kids, He loves their grandkids. I want them to know that it's okay.

Dr. James Dobson: They carried a burden of those years.

Dennis Swanberg: And when I go and speak, I'll have people come at churches conferences and they'll come up when all of a sudden, I share a little bit about this, the room changes. The radio just changed, just you opening up about Shirley's dad, the room in here, we changed right there and the room changes and I'll have people

come up and go, "My son's in prison. My daughter, my son's on drugs, or he's having alcohol." Or I'll have a guy come up and go "26 years. I've been sober 26 years." I said, "Thank you buddy. Let me hug you and I'll give him my big hug." I had a guy come up to me one time, he had his 25 year sober coin. He said, "Look here brother Dennis, I just got my 25 year sober coin." I went, "Man, that's awesome." He said, "Give it to your boys for me when you get home."

Dr. James Dobson: Really?

Dennis Swanberg: 25 year coin, tell 'em they can do it.

Dr. James Dobson: There is the other side to this story that you've written about, this side that you have written is to share your secrets with the right person. The other side of that is the recipient who needs to give you love at a moment like that.

Dennis Swanberg: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: It's really about love. It's a two sided story, isn't it?

Dennis Swanberg: It's two sided, and here's another thing. There's times when I'll share something like that, and I may have some folks in ministry, other pastors sort of go, "Well, he was gone too much. He was on the road all time. He should have stayed home more or whatever you think." I hadn't thought about that 10,000 times, but here's the deal. I won't say anything, even if they're right in my face about something, I go, "Well, I appreciate you sharing that." I can't tell you how many times, dozens of times I've had that a pastor call me a year later, two years later and say, "Brother Dennis, would you mind if my wife talks to your wife and could I talk to you? Our son's in trouble." I don't throw it back into his face. I go, "Sure, I'd be glad to help you." Because the bottom line is we're all in this life together.

It's just a matter of time when things happen, but praise the Lord. We have a heavenly Father who's always there, and it's not over. My boys. I tell 'em all the time, you're in the locker room. Second half, ball games are one of the third and fourth quarter and sometimes overtime. Here's the bottom line. God wants you to win, and that's what I want everyone to know. You can win. Mom, dad, you can win, son, daughter, you can win. Mamaw, Papa, Mimi, Pops, Poops, Pops, Mimi, Gaga, you can win. Pastor, you can win. Single person, you can win. Whatever your challenge is, you can win.

Dr. James Dobson: Let me leave our listeners with this thought. Jesus who knows every one of your secrets. There's not a thing He does not know about you. You've committed them to Him, but you still drag along that chain behind you because it's an embarrassment. But someday He's going to look at you and say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant." Is that going to be a marvelous moment? I think he's going to say that to you someday, Dennis.

Dennis Swanberg: I hope so, and I hope folks will remember David wasn't perfect. He messed up bad, but remember what God told Solomon? He didn't bring up Bathsheba. He said, I want you to have the heart of your daddy. Wow. He knows the hearts of all of us.

Dr. James Dobson: He killed a man, took his wife. God forgave that. If He can he forgive that, can He forgive you?

Dennis Swanberg: Amen. I want you to have the heart of your Father.

Dr. James Dobson: Dennis, I've loved having you here, yesterday and today, and the name of the book is *No More Secrets* by Dr. Dennis Swanberg. We've heard you speak many times. We've laughed with you. We've cried a little with you today. I love you like a brother.

Dennis Swanberg: Thank you. I love you.

Dr. James Dobson: Thanks for being with us.

Roger Marsh: Truth is the gateway to freedom, a powerful takeaway from today's conversation here on Family Talk featuring Dr. James Dobson and our special guest, Dr. Dennis Swanberg. Now, if you missed any portion of today's broadcast or if you'd like to share it with a friend, go to [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). You'll find the link for the program as well as a link for Dennis Swanberg's book called *No More Secrets*. Again, that's [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk).

You know, this year the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute is celebrating its 15th anniversary. Who, but Dr. James Dobson has the capacity to launch not one, but two successful mega media ministries in his lifetime, 33 years with one, 15 now with JDFI. Truly remarkable. In honor of this milestone in ministry, we are gathering stories from listeners like you, asking questions like, how has Dr. Dobson's wisdom that he shares on Family Talk each and every day, how has it blessed your family? Or was there some advice that might've saved your marriage from one of our programs or one of his books, guidance that helped you raise godly children? I'm thinking of the book, *Night Light for Parents* in that instance, perhaps encouragement during life's storms. Well, whatever your experience, it's a part of the ministry of JDFI's legacy. So together let's celebrate how God has worked through Dr. James Dobson to champion faith and family for 15 incredible years here at Family Talk. So please visit [drJamesdobson.org](http://drJamesdobson.org) to share your story. That's [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org).

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Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and from all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute and the Family Talk broadcast, thank you for making us a part of your day, and be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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