



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Three R's of Parenting – Part 1

Guest(s): John Rosemond

Air Date: July 17, 2025

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 Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and you know, as parents, we all want to raise children with strong character and godly values. As grandparents, we want to see our children carry on that tradition. But in today's culture, it can feel overwhelming to know where to start. How do we teach our kids respect when they're surrounded by messages that encourage the opposite? How do we build that foundation of character that will serve them throughout all of their lives? Well, on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we're bringing you a powerful conversation featuring Dr. Dobson and education expert, John Rosemond, about his book, *A Family of Value*. John calls himself a psychological heretic, and in just a moment, you're gonna find out why. In today's discussion, you'll hear practical advice on teaching respect, establishing healthy authority in your home, and why good old fashioned common sense might be exactly what your family needs. Here now to begin today's conversation is our own Dr. James Dobson introducing his guest, John Rosemond on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: You call yourself a psychological heretic. Explain why?

John Rosemond: Well, because I really don't subscribe to what I would refer to, Jim, as the party line in psychology. As I see it, some 40 years ago, we stopped listening to grandma and her ageless wisdom when it came to how children should be reared in America. And we started listening instead to people like us. And unfortunately, as you know, Jim, our profession tends to be very secular in its understanding of issues. My feeling is that the mental health professional with no wittingness about it led the American family in the wrong direction. And that a lot of the problems that we see today with America's children and with their discipline, and a lot of the problems in a more general sense that we're seeing with the American family have to do with a new-veo philosophy of family living that was marketed to us by mental health professionals in the media, beginning of the '50s and '60.

Dr. James Dobson: And it's getting more extreme all the time. I find myself farther and farther from the mainstream of the psychology profession with the passage of time. The

research that's been released just recently, just absolutely blows me away. I don't know if you're aware that the Psychological Bulletin carried an article and a meta-analysis, if you will of-

John Rosemond: Pedophilia.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, having to do with the sexual abuse of children and saying it wasn't all that big a deal, and most kids are not hurt by. There was another one called deconstructing the father, saying that fathers are not needed. I mean, these are crazy ideas. And I find myself like you do looking backward to the wisdom of where we've been, because grandma did know, didn't she?

John Rosemond: Oh, yes, she knew. And it's not to say that there was some children who were not raised well by their parents back then. There will always be, given the fallible condition of the human race, there will always be bad parents and people who shouldn't have had children in the first place. But from all accounts, and in fact, all the numbers would support the idea that children fared better, even though they grew up all of them in imperfect families 50 years ago than they are faring today. One of the things that just horrifies me is the increase in violence among children. The teacher reports of the gross amplification of behavior problems in the classroom and so on and so forth. I think the message is all around us in our culture. What we have failed to do in an overall sense is that we have turned our attention as parents away from instruction and character in the American family.

And we are now today focused on the development of specific skills, such as soccer talents and developing a gifted child. And we're no longer focusing on what Scripture calls the things that remain. I keep telling people, "You know, it's fine and dandy that your child's soccer team wins the state tournament when he's seven years old. But when he's 25, that's going to be irrelevant in a job interview. No one is going to ask him, 'How many ribbons did you acquire in afterschool activities?'" What they're going to be looking at is the substance of his being, his personality, his social skills-

Dr. James Dobson: And his character.

John Rosemond: And his character, all of which reflects character, of course. And I tell parents, "What we need to begin doing is using the families as a workshop, as a classroom to once again turn our attention to character issues and child rearing." I started out with a very idealistic mindset. And Willie and I were parents when she was 19 and I was 21. And I was playing in a rock and roll band. And I was a leftist, liberal, college agitator at the time.

My story is one of a lot of bumps in the road and a lot of curves in the road. And I finally realized, Willie and I both came to the same epiphany I would say when Eric was nine years old, that despite our best intentions we were not growing the children that we wanted to grow and the children that we were responsible

for growing to the Lord. So we examined ourselves at that point in time and realized that, "Well, what we were doing was we were following a psychological prescription for child rearing, instead of a Scriptural prescription."

Dr. James Dobson: Some of the things that you are writing today, including this book, *A Family of Value*, comes out of that understanding. And let's talk about three of them. You kind of organize the major portion of this book around three R's. You put heavy emphasis on respect, explain it.

John Rosemond: Well, I think it all begins there. I think it is Scriptural, an accurate interpretation of Scripture to say that you don't develop respect, true legitimate authentic respect for yourself until you have given respect away in adequate amounts to your fellow human being. And what I see, and what teachers tell me around the country who I talk to, and I talk to a lot of teachers. I specifically seek out in my travels teachers who've been teaching for 30, 40 years. I ask these people, "What have you seen in children? What general observations can you make then versus now?" And one of the common things that's always referred to is that today's child has less respect for adult authority. And in my estimation, this speaks to not bad parenting, but it speaks to parents that are probably working very hard in most cases to do the right thing, but their energies are misplaced.

One of the things that I have sized time and time again with parents is, you can work very hard, but put your energies in a counter-productive direction and not get a very good outcome. You can put a minimal amount, a conservative amount of parenting energy in the right direction and come out with a fantastic outcome. And I think today's parents, again, it's not a matter of not wanting to do a good job. It's a matter of they have been so propagandized by these psychological professional messages. That really, when it comes to teaching something as basic as respect, they just don't understand the fundamentals and how to do it.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's talk about them. We're talking to many parents out there who are concerned about that. Their children don't show respect for them or for their teachers or for other forms of authority in the culture. Where do they start? What do they look for? How do you build that cornerstone?

John Rosemond: I think the cornerstone is an intact family with a father and a mother who put their marriage first, who are husband and wife before they are mother and father. And it's not that the children get neglected or shoved to the side, but that the children see that there is a relationship at the center of the family that stabilizes this family, that empowers this family.

Dr. James Dobson: So they are showing respect for one another?

John Rosemond: That they're showing respect for one another. And that respect for one another galvanizes the children's attention. It causes the children to pay attention to their parents, which is a litmus test of the children's respect. And then from

there to more practical level, I think the next thing that parents have to do is to teach good manners, such basic things as "please, and thank you," and "you're welcome." And "yes, ma'am and no ma'am."

Dr. James Dobson: What would you do or recommend that a parent do when a child seven years of age looks up at mom or dad and said, "You shut up, I will not do it." And is very sassy and disrespectful to the parent?

John Rosemond: Well, my own, I can remember an incident like that with my daughter. I told her to set the table. She stomped, she was about seven, Jim. I was cooking dinner that evening. Willie wasn't home. Amy comes behind me in the kitchen. And I said, "Amy, I need you to set the table this evening." She stomped her foot. She said, "I'm not going to do it. You always tell me to do everything. You never tell Eric to do anything." And she just went on and on. And at some point, I became deaf to her words. And all I could hear was this totally disrespectful tone. And I put down whatever I was doing. And I turned around very calmly, walked over to her, turned her to the side, whacked her twice on her shock absorber and-

Dr. James Dobson: A place specifically designed.

John Rosemond: ...designed, and turned her back around and said, "Now you listen to me, young lady. Number one, you don't have permission to talk to me or any other adult in that fashion. Number two, when an adult, whether in this home or somebody I've identified as an authority figure tells you to do something, you do it. Number three, you will set the table and then you'll go to your room and remain there until dinner time. You can join us for dinner. As long as you're well behaved, you can stay with us at the table. And then after dinner you're going to bed." I have to tell you, my daughter is now 27-years-old. She's married. She's a delightful individual. She's a good friend. She turned my place setting 90 degrees before she went to her room. She had to get the last word, but she did it. And that's sort of the approach that I would recommend. I mean, it would vary from situation to situation, but that's generally speaking the approach.

Dr. James Dobson: You have taken a lot of heat for recommending spanking under certain circumstances, and so have I, and I'd like to hear you defend that position. There aren't very many of us left who will do so, because of the tragedy of child abuse and people do abuse children. And the implications of a harsh and unloving parent doing that has caused people to back away from what I have felt for 30 years was appropriate under the right circumstances. And you apparently agree?

John Rosemond: From a scientific point of view, if you look at the research, none of the research that seems to support the contention that spanking has negative behavioral or psychological effects is worth the paper it was written on.

Dr. James Dobson: It's none, it's none.

John Rosemond: It would be, have been held up, Jim, as you know, in our experimental psychology classes as a prime example of horribly done research. Yet this research is being used to promote a pseudo-scientific conclusion to the effect that spanking causes children to become violent later in life or increases that risk, et cetera, et cetera.

Dr. James Dobson: There's no evidence of that whatsoever.

John Rosemond: Absolutely none. I was before an audience and in fact, Pueblo, Colorado about three years ago and about 750 people, just 50 miles down the road from where we are now. And this issue was on my mind. And I started talking about it sort of impromptu in front of the audience. And I said, "How many of you were spanked as children?" And almost everybody raised their hands. And I said, "Well, now I can't believe that there are this many violent criminal types who were attracted to my talks." And there was this pause and everybody understood what I was talking about. They just burst out laughing, you know? But the evidence overwhelmingly suggests that children who are horribly abused don't even necessarily become violent. They might become terribly depressed and never act out violently at all.

On the other hand, they might become violent, we have to be concerned about that situation. But the evidence also suggests that a mild to moderate spanking administered occasionally on an appropriate disciplinary situation does nothing but increase the power of the parent's message to the child. And therefore increase the likelihood that the child will stop misbehaving in that fashion. And I maintain we have an obligation to children to get them to stop misbehaving.

Dr. James Dobson: There is a vast difference between the parent who is responding to the child's defiance and uses that technique in a controlled and loving manner, hugs the child afterwards, uses it as a teaching tool, is committed to the teeth to the welfare of that child. As opposed to parents who are slapping kids around and wounding them and hurting them, hate him really, and neglected them. And the people who do research on this put those two camps together. Everybody who uses corporal punishment is all in the same camp. Well, of course you're going to get a difference between those that are lumped together like that and those who don't. And so it is just faulty research. And yet the American Pediatric Association has concluded that that is harmful and yet many, many pediatricians disagree.

John Rosemond: But you know, the problem in our society today, Jim, is that we used to live our lives according to two sort of guiding principles. And they were Judeo-Christian tradition and family tradition. We used to revere these two sources of information concerning how to live our lives. And I tell my audiences, "The problem today is that the average American, and I dare say even many people who profess close attachment to Judeo-Christian values, unfortunately, they live their lives in a secular fashion. They let the media tell them how to live their lives." And the media has taken the side basically of these politically correct messages concerning spanking and other issues that you and I deal with. And so

the American public is understandably convinced, you spank a child and this teaches the child to be violent, when there's no evidence of that whatsoever.

Dr. James Dobson: As a matter of fact, John, I'm sure you've taken heat for this one too. You say that children should be intimidated by their parents. Explain that.

John Rosemond: Well, I think there's a difference between being intimidated by one's parents, which I think is a legitimate expression on the part of the child of awe and respect, and the parent's effectiveness at galvanizing that awe and respect. And a child who is fearful in the sense of he's shaking in his boots, whether proverbially or literally, when his parents walk into the room. Certainly there are children who fear their parents in that second sense of the term. Those parents are not teachers. The parent more than anything else needs to be a teacher, and any good teacher intimidates her students or his students. You can't teach unless to some degree you intimidate. And by that, I mean, you convince this individual that you know more than he does, that you know the right answers, and that he has a need and a self-interest to look to you for that guidance and those answers.

And that's the only way, ultimately that the child is ever going to understand the responsibilities that he must assume within his relationship with God. And I tell parents, "If you don't provide that model at an age at which the child can't understand the concept of God, then when the child does get to that age, it's going to be very difficult for him to understand that he's not free to rebel against our Father."

Dr. James Dobson: You call it a benevolent dictatorship?

John Rosemond: Exactly. Benevolent dictatorship.

Dr. James Dobson: With the emphasis on benevolent.

John Rosemond: Yeah, yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Why are parents having so much difficulty with establishing authority and respect, John? Why is that so tough for them today?

John Rosemond: I think they've been deluged by so many messages from the mental health community that they just can't act with a clear sense of purpose anymore and a sense of confidence. The parents that I talk to around the country, and the conversations I have with them, it leads me consistently to believe that today's parents second guess themselves constantly. They think too much about every single interaction they're about to have with their child.

Dr. James Dobson: You have said in fact that child rearing is really not that difficult.

John Rosemond: No, it's not that difficult at all. We've made it difficult. Grandma can tell you it wasn't difficult. And people say, "Well, times have changed. The times are more difficult." And I say, "Wait a second. My grandparents when they were alive told me the child-rearing was easy. These people raised children when there was a war and a depression. Now don't tell me that things were easy. They weren't easy, but these people had a sense of purpose and a clear headed means of accomplishing that purpose and child-rearing." And I think we've lost the clear-headedness of it. And one of the things that I do as I travel around the country is child-rearing isn't hard, staying married is hard. Child-rearing is easy. You don't have to negotiate anything with a child. One of the problems, and you illustrated it that there is, that the media, the mental health professional community by and large over the last 30 to 40 years has led parents to believe that you should conduct the parent-child relationship the same way that you conduct the husband-wife relationship, or a relationship between any two adults.

They have not acknowledged for 30 years that there is a fundamental difference, qualitative and quantitative between the parent-child relationship and a relationship that exists between two adults. And one symptom of this idea that, and it's caused adult-child relationships to become leveled in many cases, is this absurd notion that it's possible for a teacher to have a personality conflict with a child. This is driving me crazy lately. I hear people say, "My son's third grade teacher is having a personality conflict with him." And of course, what they're referring to is a child who is not obeying his teacher. And doesn't like her and goes home and complains about the teacher, and the parent, because the parent doesn't hold a traditional scripturally-based view of adult-child relationships takes the child's possession and comes forth with this absurd statement that the teacher and the child are having a personality conflict.

And I usually look at the parent, because I tend to be blunt, gentle, but blunt, hopefully gentle, but blunt. And I usually say, "You know what I think you're talking about is a teacher that's probably got some very legitimate problems with your child. I think your defensiveness is causing you to be unable to listen to the teacher. And I want to point out to you that there's going to be great damage done to your child's ability to have respect for authority figures if you don't side with that teacher and support her authority."

Dr. James Dobson: John, you are speaking to 200 audiences per year, traveling back and forth across North America, I'm sure. You find parents are hungry for this traditional understanding? Are they questioning, are they asking, are they uneasy with the responsibility of raising kids?

John Rosemond: Oh, they're terribly uneasy. They're terribly insecure. One of the things I say at the outset of many of my talks is that I'm aware who I'm talking to. I'm talking to through none of their own fault or failing the most neurotic, anxious, guilty generation of parents to ever inhabit this culture. And of course that draws a great laugh, but I sense that the laugh is a sigh of relief that, "Oh, we're in the right place, you know? This guy is going to help us get rid of all that." And that's

really what I try to do by just as you said earlier, talking common sense and reminding them that Judeo-Christian Scripture, it's all right there.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you have a lot of that common sense in your book, *A Family of Value: A Straight Talk on Strengthening the American family and Rearing Successful, Happy Children from America's Most Widely Read Parenting Authority*, John Rosemond. It's been good to have you here, John. And there's a lot more to talk about. We began by saying that you've built this book around three R's, and we talked about the first one of respect. Will you be with us next time, and we'll pick up with the other two?

John Rosemond: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's do it.

Roger Marsh: John Rosemond reminds us that good parenting doesn't require a psychology degree, just common sense rooted in timeless biblical principles. You're listening to day one of Dr. James Dobson's conversation with nationally syndicated columnist and education expert, John Rosemond, here on Family Talk. And if you enjoyed what John had to say and would like a copy of his book, *A Family of Value*, visit drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. That's also where you can go back and listen to any part of the broadcast you might have missed. And be sure to tune in again next time for the conclusion when you'll hear about the other two "R's" of successful parenting. Go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk for information about John Rosemond's book, *A Family of Value*, and also to hear the complete conversation featuring Dr. Dobson and John Rosemond in its entirety.

Speaking of building stronger families, I want to remind you about a practical new email series we've created. It's called "Conflict in Marriage." Now this series tackles four essential questions that married couples have to be able to answer. First, "Why do arguments arise even though neither spouse wants to fight?" Second, "How can you tell if your conflicts are normal or might be signs of deeper problems?" Third, "What does it mean to fight the right way in marriage?" And finally, "How can you help your spouse handle disagreements more thoughtfully because it's always him or her who flies off the handle, right?" Well, these practical insights could transform how you and your spouse navigate difficult conversations in your marriage, so sign up for the "Conflict in Marriage" email series today. It's absolutely free, and it's easy to do too when you go to drjamesdobson.org.

Here at the JDPI, we are committed to equipping families and especially married couples with biblical wisdom that stands the test of time. While modern culture constantly shifts its parenting advice, moving the proverbial goalposts, if you will, the Bible remains our unchanging roadmap for raising children with character and integrity, and your financial partnership helps us to continue in that mission. You can give a gift online at drjamesdobson.org, or call a member of our constituent care team. They're happy to take your call at 877-732-6825.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and on behalf of Dr. James Dobson and all of us here at the JDFI, thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time for part two of Dr. Dobson's conversation with John Rosemond as they explore responsibility and resourcefulness in child rearing. That's coming up next time right here on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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