



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Wake Up Your Faith– Part 2

**Guest(s):** Jen Lilley

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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 back to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, sitting in the co-host seat today. And our guest is actress, singer, producer, philanthropist, foster mom, Jen Lilley, who's the author of, among other things, but she's the author of a brand new devotional book called *Wake Up Your Faith: 365 Daily Encounters with Jesus*. A journey of spiritual renewal and divine purpose, which we have up at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). Jen Lilly, welcome back to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Jen Lilley: Thank you so much, Roger. I cannot wait to keep talking.

Roger Marsh: How long were you and Jason married before you had that come to Jesus moment where you had to say, you know what, sweetheart, I have an eating disorder. Because he didn't know and you were hiding it apparently so very, very well.

Jen Lilley: I will say for parents that are listening, if you're concerned that your daughter and even boys suffer with eating disorders. Part of what drove me into bulimia was my parents knew I was struggling with anorexia. So when I was trying to get better, I asked them for healthy food. I was like, I really want vegetables and grilled chicken because mentally I needed to know that the calories I were putting in was like healthy, high quality calories. It was like helped my mental struggle. The eating disorder was also brought on because I had all these issues. I had to be put on hormone therapy as a kid. I was packing on weight because of a medication. So I'm freaking out and just trying to control it. When I wanted to just have grilled chicken and vegetables, my parents took that as a red flag to she's suffering with an eating disorder again. And so they would not feed me healthy food. They were like, just get over it. Eat what we're eating. You eat with the family. So that's kind of how I got driven into bulimia because they weren't making healthy foods at home to kind of help me deal with the anxiety I was dealing with.

Roger Marsh: Is there a reason why? I'm curious as to if you were dealing with anorexia and you were needing that, what would keep your parents from saying, wow, Jen needs this. We would need to help her out.

Jen Lilley:

They just thought that eating super healthy, just wanting to eat vegetables or grilled chicken or something would be enabling an anorexic tendency versus wanting to make sure I was getting enough protein and vegetables. They're not the healthiest eaters, so it's kind of like eat whatever the family's eating. So I found bulimia. I was very, very good at hiding it because I learned how to get very good at hiding it for years.

So when I went to my husband, we had been married for nine years, I remember he had brought home this junk food because he thought she loves, you know, cheesecake. She loves Cheetos. He worked for Frito-Lay. I'll bring her binge food. Because he didn't know. Like we were eating healthy and he was kind of like, hey, a reward for all of our healthy eating that we've been doing. Because he didn't know I was like, hey, let's do a cleanse. Let's do all these things. My husband's a really big health nut. So he's like, yeah, my wife wants to do cleanses to me. She never wants to do cleanses to me. She's a junk food addict. So he brings home these foods. I binge. I stumble. I repent again. I repent again that same night, keep making the decision. But I keep falling into this trap of, I'm going to have to tell my husband because I actually need an accountability partner. I need somebody to put a lock on our cabinet. I need him to walk through this with me. And I just remember hiking the morning that I told my husband because, you see, in the past, I had always believed that if I told you I had an eating disorder, you would leave me.

But I loved the Lord so much. I had gotten to such a place through healing, through Los Angeles churches are so real because it's not popular to be a Christian there. So like every Christian there is the most, in my opinion, idyllic Christian because they love Jesus and they love people so hard and they are just out there being the hands and feet of Jesus. And they look at everybody, it seems like, with through the lens of Heaven. I just love them so much.

I was getting really on fire at my church. I felt like I'd finally found my people who all loved Jesus as much as I did. And at the same time, in the back of my mind, before I, when I still, had my eating disorder, I knew that the accuser, even though I had the blood of Jesus and Jesus gave me His authority, I knew that the accuser could stand right there and be like, but she's bulimic. So I wanted to see signs and wonders. I wanted miracles to work through me. But I thought, there's no way that's going to happen when I have this lifestyle sin going on. So it drove me to freedom. And then when I decided to tell my husband, I was like, man, all right, I think my husband's going to divorce me today. I think he's going to leave me. But God, I had gotten to a point where I thought, even if my husband leaves me, as long as you don't take your Holy Spirit from me, I'm willing to just basically be single the rest of my life, Lord. Like I can't, I don't want to do life without You. I don't want to keep having this eating disorder. I do not want to have this sin that so easily besets me. And the reason that was really strong and powerful for me is because my favorite verses of the Bible is Matthew 7:22-23, which is the judgment day. And it's a very sobering, it's a very sobering passage. Jesus says, "Many will come to me in that

day,” meaning judgment day. They've already died, right? And Jesus will say, “And they will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not do many mighty miracles in your name? Did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not cast out demons in your name? Did we not do many mighty miracles in your name?’ And I will look at them, and I will say, depart from me, you workers of lawlessness. I never knew you.” And I thought, these are people that have faith.

Roger Marsh: Yes.

Jen Lilley: You know, casting out demons, it's the part of, you know, it's like, I don't want to get into it, but it's like the last part of the Great Commission. But yet, when do we do that in the American church? It's not kind of our standard practice. I'm just saying that to say that this is part of the Great Commission. These people obviously had faith. You're not casting out demons without having some sort of faith or knowing that you have authority in Jesus. You're definitely not doing miracles if you don't feel like you have a relationship with Jesus. And yet, if you have sin in your life that is habitual, that you're putting above the Lord, you actually have an idol. And I did not want that anymore.

And so I just came to my husband. My husband had the godliest reaction. And he hugged me, and he wept, and he was like, I feel so stupid. How did I not know? And I said, I was so good at hiding it. So he walked with me through that. So years go by. I've been free from my eating disorder, praise the Lord, for like 10 years now.

Roger Marsh: That's awesome.

Jen Lilley: So I want to encourage people. God is so kind. Ask yourself what you're trusting more than the Lord. But I got approached by an amazing woman at Broad Street Publishing, which is my publisher for *Wake Up Your Faith*. She was like, the Holy Spirit told me you're supposed to write a devotional. And I'm thinking, lady, I can see the Holy Spirit on you. I can feel Him on you. But you're wrong. Like, I'm not writing a devotional. I don't even read devotionals. Now, there are good devotionals I have found. *Jesus Calling* is a great devotional. There's many good devotionals out there. But let's be honest, there are also a lot of terrible devotionals out there that, like, just puff around. They don't really give you Scripture. They're like, I was doing my laundry today when I, you know, thought about a neighbor. And you're like, I'm like... listen lady, I got four kids and enough laundry, like more laundry than I can shake a stick at. I don't need to hear about you doing your laundry. What I need is Jesus.

Roger Marsh: Yes. Amen.

Jen Lilley: And so when they asked me like to write a devotional, I was like, I am not the candidate to do that. But I prayed about it. I fasted and I still was going to say no. And then I got on the call with Broad Street, and I told them, I was like, guys, I just really don't like devotionals, and I don't read them. And I think devotionals

can be a crutch for not reading the Word of God, and I do not want that. There's nothing I can ever say to you that is going to be more powerful than the Word of God, because the Word of God is living and active. It does not return void. Like, I cannot do anything more for you than the Word of God itself can. And they were like, that's why we think you should write a devotional. So I prayed, I fasted again, and I asked the Holy Spirit, what do You want me to address then, Lord? Like, what would I possibly write on? And He was like, "You have got to wake up My church. You have got to wake up My bride. She has to get ready." So that's why I wrote it. It's like an espresso shot. It is of Jesus. It is Scripture packed, and it is so Scripture-packed that my publishers were literally like, you cannot keep putting this much Scripture. You got to get to the point. So hopefully it drives people to read more Scripture.

Roger Marsh:

I love that. Jen Lilley is our guest today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, and we're talking about her amazing, I mean, truly remarkable testimony and the new devotional book that she didn't want to write, but the Holy Spirit told her to write it anyway, and we're glad she did. The book is called *Wake Up Your Faith: 365 Days of Daily Encounters with Jesus*. It's a journey of spiritual renewal and divine purpose. And we have it linked up at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). I love the way you lay this out with the different themes and the idea that every month has a different theme. Was there any? You don't have a favorite child, I understand that. But is there a favorite month in this devotional for you, Jen?

Jen Lilley:

I would say that probably my favorite month to read is May, which is "move in the opposite spirit." And when I say that, it's a quote from Graham Cook, which I cite everything. I always give honor where honor is due. It's basically like, look, as a Christian, if somebody were to come up to you and you're having a hard day and they just cut you off in the parking lot and then get out of their car and start screaming at you, cussing at you, obviously it feels awful. And if you're having a really bad day, you would want to be like, you know what, buddy? I whatever. You want to mouth them back off, right? Graham Cook says move in the opposite spirit. If you're a Christian, you need to actually harness the fruit of the Holy Spirit and give that person love, return hatred for love. So that's what I call moving in the opposite spirit. May is my favorite month as far as sharpening me. It's one I got to reread. But probably my most piercing month. is actually January, which is called "Clearing the Deck: the Art of Surrender." And I even, like, Broad Street was so kind to me that they let me even kind of go outside of the box even further and write, like, an introduction forward that I wrote to my audience saying, like, look, I promise I'm going to pump you up. By the time you get to December, you are going to feel like a whole new person. But January is, like, if you cannot ask yourself the hard questions, like, what am I trusting more than I'm trusting God, then I cannot build you. I cannot, like, if we don't first lay a firm foundation. But by the time you get to January, I mean, December, excuse me, December is like Christmas isn't just for miracles. It's like, I'm going to pump you up so hard. And then one month that I was really looking forward to writing is June, which is the promises of God. So good. And then also September, I love worship. And September is all about worship. But I mean, every month has been great. But it's like. Man, I always promise my reader, if

you can hang with me in January, you're not going to believe who you are by the time you get to December 31st.

Roger Marsh:

I love that intentionality. I mean, the fact that it's not—sometimes you've read a lot of devotionals. I have, too. And they're sweet. They're thoughtful. Maybe it's 21 days, 30 days, this, that, and the other thing. When you embark on taking on a whole year like you've done in *Wake Up Your Faith*, this is an endeavor that is going to take you on a journey, and you don't want to hit October and say, man, where have I been? What have I done? And I think that it's just part and parcel with what your testimony is like, Jen Lilley. I realize that you could tell that the Holy Spirit has been working through you in your acting career, in the movies that you make, in every artistic endeavor that you have, and then in this writing venture, and also in your marriage, too. I want to circle back around to you and Jason a little bit. Talk about what it was like for you on this journey. You had the revelation. okay, honey, I got to let you know. I just got to come clean. And he's like, okay I'm all in. Just like in the same way, hey, I think we need to move from Virginia. Well, I need to move from Virginia to L.A. And what do you say? And he's like, yeah, let's go, which is just the best kind of husband to have, I would imagine. Talk about what it's been like for you and your family now because you're the parents of four, but I'm sure there was a time when you were going through your season of bulimia where you're wondering, am I even going to physically survive, let alone be able to be a mom? Talk about what the parenting season has been like for you too.

Jen Lilley:

Oh, man. My husband, I live to give my husband credit. It's like God just really made us such a good partnership. Everything that I do is made possible because there's a man behind me that listens to the Holy Spirit and is so meek and is so confident in his relationship with the Lord and so confident in my relationship with the Lord that he's incredibly supportive. We've had lots of ups and downs. I mean, we felt like we had a...you know, in our seventh year, which like people call it the seven-year itch, you know, we thought like, how did we get here? We're never going to be able to come back from this. I also wrote a book that just came out called *Called To Foster: An Honest Guide to Getting Started*. And I go all through my seventh year of marriage and how we really thought we'd kind of gotten to the end of ourselves.

In my seventh year of marriage, I was still bulimic. But we also became foster parents, which is very difficult. It's a journey I would do again and again. Once we realized we were going to adopt our sons and my son Caden's case was going toward adoption, we knew I could get pregnant. I was on so many forms of birth control. But I'm very pro-life. I will say that I'm extremely pro-life. Do not mishear me. I am so pro-life. I am so pro-life that I did foster care. I mean, I am so pro-life. But because we knew we were going to be parents, I think pregnancy is so cool. I think birth is so cool. I think breastfeeding is so cool. I think it is such an amazing thing that a woman can do that the Lord allows us to do that. So I wanted to experience it. So we got pregnant with my daughter, Julie. After we knew we were already going to be parents, we were already going to adopt the boys. And then Jackie, our fourth, was the gift from God that

He knew we needed. So she was a surprised and she knows that she was the surprise we needed.

Roger Marsh: Jen Lilley is our guest today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. She is the author of the brand-new book we've been talking about called *Wake Up Your Faith: 365 Daily Encounters with Jesus*. A journey of spiritual renewal and divine purpose. And we have a link up at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). We haven't talked a lot about your movies. I would like to talk about a couple of them if we can, because you have had a really spectacular career. Once God called you during your college years to say, okay, acting, this is where you want you to go. You have a new biopic coming up, the one called *Jimmy* where you have a pretty major role in that. How did that come about? Because I think a lot of our listeners and our constituents will recognize you from *Hallmark*, from *Great American Family*, from the films that you have worked on in that space. This seems like a bit of a departure. Talk about that.

Jen Lilley: So before I did *Hallmark* and *Great American Family*, I did *Days of Our Lives*. And before I did *Days of Our Lives*, I did *General Hospital*. And before I did *General Hospital*, I did a little movie that won five Academy Awards, including Best Picture and was nominated for 10 called *The Artist*.

Roger Marsh: Well, then there's that.

Jen Lilley: Then there's that. So that's kind of like what got me on the scene, really, in year four of moving after moving to L.A. And year four is when most people make it, by the way, if they just stick with it. And I knew that. So *Jimmy* came around. And to me, I didn't audition for it, Roger. It is the craziest story of how I got it, and it was totally the Lord. I will say that leading up to it, I had gone through a two-year wilderness period that was so dark that the Lord in His kindness warned me it was going to happen six months before it was going to happen when I was on the mountaintop. And I thought, there's no way. I heard the Lord say to me in prayer, it was the most random prayer. I was fasting and praying about something totally different. And all of a sudden out of left field, again, it's the Holy Spirit usually when it's out of left field. He said, "You're about to get kicked out of the nest and you are going to feel like you are free falling to your death. But I want you to know that it's me who kicked you out of the nest because you have gotten way too cozy and I have got better things for you to do and you need to learn how to fly."

And then I went to, I ended up getting four more prophetic words from people that I do not know. And also guys like, while I believe in the prophetic, I don't just travel around with like a group of prophets. So it was really random that like four people I do not know were like, hey, I would see you and I just feel like the Lord has a word for you. Can I give it to you? And I'm like, sure. Four words, almost identical, different situations. One, for example, was a woman that she said, you're about to get in a boat and it's about the size of a rowboat and you're going to cross a massive body of water. And there is going to be a storm so severe that there are going to be many times where the water fills your boat

and you are going to think, this is a metaphor and I knew it was a metaphor. You are going to think, I am sinking. This is it. I'm sinking. But the Lord wants you to know. He is in the boat with you, and you are going to get to the other side. And so I went through a two-year wilderness period where at the same time I just came out of it this year, right before *Jimmy*, I was doing my devotional time, and I saw all of a sudden in my spirit, I saw the boat, that same rowboat, hit the shore, like in my mind, almost like a daydream. I saw it play in my mind. And I heard the Lord say, "You just made it to the other side." And I remember I started crying. And I said, "Lord, I don't want to get out of the boat. I don't want to get out of the boat, kind of, because it's been so sweet with you, even though it's been hard." I've learned. And this was the whole process of I was writing my devotional in that two-year period.

So I was so plugged into the Lord in that two-year period, which is why when I read it back, I'm like, whoa, where did I get this revelation from? It was because I was in a two-year wilderness period with the Lord, and He's so good. So when I get the call for *Jimmy*, this is what happened. It was so like the Lord just being like, you're on the other side, girlfriend. Like, I got you. Like, you learned your lessons. Oil only comes out of things that are crushed. I had to crush you pretty sufficiently. You've been good and crushed. You thought you were yielded to Me. But, you know, I was like, so the Lord's like, you've been sufficiently crushed. So I get this call. I host a podcast with this guy named Billy Halliwell who works over at CBN. Billy's awesome. And he's like, hey, I got this call from Angela Sullivan, the producer of *Jimmy*. And she asked me, hey, do you know anybody who could play Gloria Stewart? Because we need it to be a mom. We need it to be somebody that's really grounded, but who understands what it would be like to have four children. And we just need somebody that can hang out basically with high society, but comes off as very grounded. And he was like, yeah, Jen Lilley would be great at that. Angela says, oh my gosh, Jen Lilley's on the top of my list.

Roger Marsh: Oh my gosh.

Jen Lilley: But I didn't think she would do it. Do you think she would do it? and I'm like... Billy calls me and I'm like how many conversations have had people had where like my name has been in their mouth but they've never come to me and asked like whether I would do it I'm like... Just if anybody's listening that's a Christian producer, like, I am super available for work. I am very available. I have four mouths to feed. I have a great support system. So I'm really available for work. So he puts me in touch with Angela. They send me the script. She's like, oh, my gosh, I want you to do it. Basically, you have to talk to the director, though, because he's the only one of us that's not sold on you. I had been on two other producers' list, like, on the list. Like, who would be great at Gloria Stewart? Jen Lilley. So I go to meet Aaron Burns. We meet over a Zoom because he's in one state, I'm in another. And I was put together enough. I didn't have dirt on my face, but I literally think I had a ball cap on. We're meeting over a Zoom. And he's like, hey, what have you been up to outside of acting? And I'm like, man, I'm building a woodland trail right now for my kids in the woods. I'm chopping

down trees. And he's like, yourself? And I'm like, yeah. I've been working all day. I'm just hauling trees out from the woods, trying to make them a path. He has five kids and I have four. And he apparently, so the legend goes, he got off the call and was like, she's 100% Gloria. And then apparently Jimmy's daughter also approved me. And so off I was. So I didn't even have to audition for it. And I felt like it was the Lord saying, again, you can trust Me and I'm taking you places.

Roger Marsh: Jen, we're talking about your devotional, *Wake Up Your Faith*, and I know you have a campaign, an initiative called "Wake Up Your Campus" as well. Talk about what that entails. So that entails basically getting the devotional in the hands of college students and doing it in a very unique way. I feel this was also given to me by the Holy Spirit, where I'm partnering with on-campus ministries, and then I am hiding tickets all over campus, kind of like Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory. They are bright pink. They say "Wake Me Up," they have a QR code on them.

Roger Marsh: How fun.

Jen Lilley: So fun, right? And the student can basically download the devotional and they can get a free copy. They can get a hard copy if they want, all free to them, all free to the campus ministry. And if the student reads any entry and they give a one-sentence reflection. And it can even be like, I hate your book. I'll be like, OK, great. You're entered to win. One student from each campus will win \$1,000 just for trying. And then four different students will win a Starbucks gift card. And it's really been amazing. We launched in spring of 2026. I got a lot of data from it. But what was so profound is that what I did find is that students didn't just give some, hey, I hate your book. Nobody said that, actually. The students who actually read it deeply engaged in it. One student came back 90 times. The average student came back 6.5 times. And we have seen a huge, because I'm telling you, this devotional was written by Holy Spirit. I'm telling you, I co-labored with the Lord on this one. And so it's not the words of Jen Lilley they're reading. Their hearts have been pierced. And so it's, if I can get the devotional just in the hands of these students, God is doing a major work. I mean, And college students repenting, college students considering Jesus for the first time, college students realizing their identity for the first time. So I formed a non-profit. It's called Jen Lilley Ministries. And basically for \$10, somebody can sponsor a student. And that's what we're doing all over the United States. And I'm just really grateful to the Lord for all that He's doing and that I get to be part of it. And people can be part of it too.

Roger Marsh: The time has just flown right by and we've had such a wonderful conversation. Jen Lilly, the book is called, well, it's a devotional book, but there's a lot more to it than just your standard devotional book the way I see it. It's called *Wake Up Your Faith: 365 Daily Encounters with Jesus*. A journey of spiritual renewal and divine purpose. And we have a link for the book up at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). Jen, thank you so much for your heart, for your passion, for your authenticity, and for being with us today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Really enjoyed the conversation.

Jen Lilley: Such an honor.

Roger Marsh: Well, what an incredible testimony of trust from Jen Lilly today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. From welcoming children through foster care and adoption to walking through a long wilderness season, Jen reminds us that God is in the boat with us and he will see us safely to the other side. By the way, you can learn more about Jen Lilley's new devotional called *Wake Up Your Faith: 365 Daily Encounters with Jesus*. A journey of spiritual renewal and divine purpose. You'll find that linked at [jdfi.org](http://jdfi.org), as well as the audio for parts one and two of this conversation.

Well, throughout these past couple of programs, you've heard a powerful reminder of why the ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute is so important. Each day we hear from listeners who tell us how the JDFI has strengthened their walk with God and given them hope. And right now you have a unique opportunity to help us reach even more families. Thanks to some incredibly generous friends of our ministry, we have a special July matching grant in effect. This means that any donation you make to the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute throughout the month of July will be doubled up to \$250,000. Your gift of \$100 becomes \$200, a \$200 gift becomes \$300, a \$10,000 gift becomes \$20,000. You get the idea.

You know, as a listener-supported ministry, your partnership makes everything we do possible. And your gift today will help bring biblical truth, hope, and encouragement to families all across the nation, strengthening marriages, equipping parents, and pointing people to the love of Jesus Christ. To make your donation securely, visit [jdfi.org](http://jdfi.org). If you'd like to speak with a member of our constituent care team, that number is 877-732-6825. They'll let you know how you can make your contribution over the phone. Again, dial 877-732-6825. Or if you'd like to make your contribution through the U.S. Postal Service, our ministry mailing address is the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code 80949.

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

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