



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Forgiving What You Can't Forget – Part 2

Guest(s): Lysa TerKeurst

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Dr. Dobson: Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

Dr. Clinton: I'm Dr. Tim Clinton for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Before we begin today's broadcast, I want to encourage you with a message from the Bible. During these uncertain days, read Psalm 62. I hope you'll do that. In this passage, King David praises the many dependable attributes of God. Here are just a few of them: God is our refuge; rock; fortress; defender; rescuer; and our salvation. I hope you'll remember these qualities in the midst of these trying times. He is there for you. And we will get through this, with God's help.

From Dr. Dobson, his wife Shirley, their entire family, and everyone at the James Dobson Family Institute, have a blessed Christmas season. Let's begin.

Roger Marsh: Welcome friends to today's program! I'm Roger Marsh, and today we are revisiting another program that made our 2020 best-of-broadcast list. Hope you enjoy it.

Dr. Dobson: Hi, everyone. I'm James Dobson, and this is Family Talk. This program focuses its attention day-by-day on where the family is and to address the challenges and stresses that it faces. It also deals with morality and the battle for righteousness within the culture. And finally, Family Talk and its wider ministry, James Dobson Family Institute, seeks to introduce people to Jesus Christ and biblical truth. That's our primary objective. So, thank you for helping to support this work and the dedicated staff that carry on its mission. And we appreciate that support, especially this time of the year. Now, yesterday, we began a two-part series offering hope and solace to people who have been badly wounded by sexual abusers and uncaring members of the family. Sometimes including spouses or friends who betrayed them. Our audience today, and every day, includes men and women who have suffered painful experiences that have left them angry, and bitter and disabled emotionally.

If that describes you, the listener, our program yesterday, and again today, is specifically for you. Now, our guest for these two days by phone is Lysa

TerKeurst. She is a celebrated author, having sold six million books. She leads an organization called Proverbs 31, whose mission is to lead people into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. Lysa has written two books that relate to the issue I described. The first came out in 2018 and it's titled *It's Not Supposed To Be This Way*. And the second is more recent and it's related to the first and it's titled *Forgiving What You Can't Forget*. Here is a recorded phone conversation that followed what you heard yesterday. And it begins with this question:

Lysa, you revealed a very personal crisis that occurred in your marriage. And it involved Art's infidelity and the struggles that followed. Through counseling and prayer and the passage of time you were able to forgive him. But reconciliation didn't happen immediately. This is a very private situation, Lysa, and I wouldn't even ask you about it if you hadn't discussed it in your book. Tell us, however, how the two of you are doing today. Has the marriage survived?

Lysa TerKeurst: It is strong, but I would say it's still not a fairy book story. I don't know that you put two sinners together who are very human, and I'm not sure that the script ever quite goes, "And they lived happily ever after." I think it is possible to be happy. And I think it is possible to find a beautiful rhythm inside of a relationship, but it's never easy. And I think if it were perfect, then we would have no need for God, and no human can ever perfectly satisfy us all the time, and fill up all of our wrongs and right all of our insecurities. And I think so many times we get married and we think "finally, this person's going to make everything right. They're going to just fix all the wrongs that have ever been created." In other words, I think we say, "Man, this person's going to be a really great substitute for God Himself." And that's just not possible. Art can be my husband, but he cannot be my God.

Dr. Dobson: Well, you're so right about that, Lysa. There are no perfect marriages, because there are no perfect human beings. It's always a surprise to find out after a wedding that you've married somebody who has flaws. Well, guess what? We all do. Jesus was the only perfect one. Marriage always brings together two flawed individuals who somehow become one flesh through divine guidance and blessing. Lysa, there's another aspect to your story that needs to be understood. You've had to deal with another tragic experience. And this one as a child. You revealed in your book that you were sexually abused repeatedly as a little girl.

You are among the millions of women, and some men too, who have been assaulted sexually as kids. Only those who have been through this can fully comprehend its devastating impact. And I'm sure that experience is still with you today. Tell me, does the memory of those days help explain your compassion for hurting people that appears in your books?

Lysa TerKeurst: Well, of course I look back and wish with everything in my heart that that abuse was not a reality for me or for anyone else that's ever suffered it. But I will say that because I walked through that, I became aware of how deeply wounded people can be from situations that they carry in their past. And I think that it's

made me more compassionate. And another part of the forgiveness journey is to recognize that the other person who hurt you, they don't get off scot-free, even if you see pictures of them where it looks like they're just living their best life and they suffered no consequences.

But I know that the only way that my abuser would have ever hurt me the way that he hurt me is if he himself had been so deeply wounded in really hard, horrific ways. And I don't have to know the facts of his story. I don't even have to know any details of whether his hurt came when he was little, or older or what happened. But we can always know that if someone's breathing, they have at some point in their life experienced a deep wounding. And so while we may not be able to have compassion on that person that's hurt us, we can potentially have compassion on the wounding that they surely must have suffered in order to make them do something as hard and awful as maybe what has been done to you.

Dr. Dobson: My heart really does go out to you, Lysa, because you've had to learn to forgive not only an unfaithful husband, but also the pedophile who abused you as a child.

Let's talk about the healing process, Lysa. You made a point in *Forgiving What You Can't Forget*, that even though you have forgiven someone who hurt you with the help of the Lord, sorrow and sad feelings often persist. And that is certainly true. If a person was beaten with a whip, leaving open wounds on the back, the scars would remain even after forgiveness has occurred, because feelings are usually involuntary. They aren't chosen. They just are. And the Creator who made us understands that aspect of our nature. So, what is forgiveness? It's giving up your right to hurt the other person who hurt you. It's letting go of the anger and the desire to get even. And we're called to do this as a follower of Jesus Christ, but you still may feel wounded and sad. Do you agree with that?

Lysa TerKeurst: I do. And something that I remember writing in my journal a long time ago is that I am not going to be a person that sugar coats or denies what I'm feeling, because I think feeling points us toward a healing that needs to happen. And I wrote this in my journal, "My feelings need to be indicators, not dictators."

Dr. Dobson: That's it.

Lysa TerKeurst: In other words, my feelings need to indicate that something needs to be tended to, but my feelings must not dictate how I act and react.

Dr. Dobson: Have you had difficulty forgiving God for letting you go through these hardships? That's a trap that many people fall in to. Did being victimized become a barrier in your relationship with the Lord?

Lysa TerKeurst:

Well, it's interesting. I actually wrote a chapter called, "Forgiving God," in *Forgiving What You Can't Forget*. And I think that kind of seems shocking to some people. Because of course, we know God is sinless. He did not sin. So God does not need to be forgiven. But I think what I'm really saying there is when we go through hard times, it can feel really confusing. That our all-powerful, all-knowing God, would allow something to happen that is just so hard and horrific. And so, I really do wrestle in that chapter with the fact that it's not that I needed to forgive God, but learning to trust Him again, was a journey. But I have this kind of odd thing that was happening right at the same time that I was going through a lot of this processing.

I was in a home renovation. And I remember the day that they came in to tear down some walls and rip out some cabinets. And I thought, "isn't this so telling of my whole situation I'm facing right now." If I woke up today, and I walked into my kitchen, and there was a man standing in my kitchen with a sledgehammer, and he was bashing my countertops, and slamming my cabinets and tearing things off of the wall, I would be shocked and horrified. And say like, "Wait, wait, what are you doing? Don't do that." And I would just be just so angry. Except there I was standing in my kitchen, there was a man standing there doing all of that, tearing out all of it. But I was giving him permission to do so because he was a master builder and he was tearing out the old to put in the new.

So it wasn't a traumatic process. I could embrace the process because I trusted the builder. And I just remember thinking, maybe I need to look at some of the situations in my life with God and say, "God, You are a master builder. And what humans tear down, You are so capable of building back even more beautiful. And I need to learn to trust You." And so I let that renovation picture just be kind of burned into my brain. Sometimes when I don't understand God, and there are many situations where I don't understand, but I can still trust Him. I don't have to have all the facts to have faith that God does some of His best work in the unseen.

Dr. Dobson:

Yeah. I said in my book *When God Doesn't Make Sense*, that people who have been deeply hurt by life, often blame God for it. And they sulk and brood over it for years. And they hit what I call a betrayal barrier. They come to a point where they just cannot understand. They think, "if God really loved me, He wouldn't have allowed me to go through this unthinkable thing." If they're ever going to get past that barrier, they have to forgive God. Now, I've been criticized for saying that, because we agree that God has done nothing wrong, and He is omnipotent and He loves us infinitely. And so, it comes down to this. You can trust Him even in those situations when you can't track Him.

Lysa TerKeurst:

Yes. And I think that I've learned, instead of looking at my circumstances, trying to add those up and determine: "is God good?" Instead of that, I try to start each day by saying this phrase, "God is good. God is good to me. And God is good at being God." And that's the lens I need to look at my circumstances through. Not determining whether or not God is good based on my

circumstances, but declaring that God is good. Therefore, I can have a different view of my circumstances.

Dr. Dobson: You say in your book that forgiveness should be a regular part of our life, like eating and sleeping. Explain that.

Lysa TerKeurst: Well, I was kind of astounded when I was looking at the Lord's prayer in Matthew chapter six, and Jesus is saying like, "This is then how you should pray," starting in verse nine. And he does the introduction, "our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." And then "give us today our daily bread." And then he seems to make the rest of the prayer about confession, forgiveness, not being tempted by the evil one. And then a little bit more about forgiveness. And I thought, wow, over half the words of that prayer are focused on some part of forgiveness. Us receiving forgiveness from God, and us giving forgiveness and us not getting tricked by the evil one. And I just thought, I'm not sure I would have made that the focus of the prayer. And yet, Jesus did.

And I just think that would be such a beautiful way to live, is just to be able to go ahead and look at someone and say, "You know what? I understand that you must be going through a hard time right now. And I've already forgiven you before you even said that. Now, just go on about your day. It's okay. We're good." And just because someone lays down an offense doesn't mean we have to pick it up, carry it, make it part of who we are, and then repeat it and give it to a whole bunch of other people. And I just think the world needs a whole lot more people who are a whole lot less offended.

Dr. Dobson: Well, it takes courage and maturity to do that, Lysa. To let go of an offense, especially if it went to the core of your being. Our tendency as human beings is to wallow in misery, and keep replaying it and reliving it. And that leads to bitterness. And I believe the scripture warns us not to do that. You have to let go with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Lysa TerKeurst: Yeah. It's definitely just because I was in situations desperate enough to need this wisdom. And also letting God's word interrupt my natural thought processes. Because sometimes my own human reasoning can really bristle against some of this. And the resistance to forgiveness can be really, really strong. Because when you say the word forgiveness, people immediately attach some of the most hurtful things that they've ever been through. And so I understand why people cross their arms, lean back and just say, "Whoa, no." But I can say that those who embrace this forgiveness process are the ones who dance most freely and beautifully in redemption on the other side.

Dr. Dobson: From doing this program through the years, one of my approaches has been to try to perceive what the listener is feeling and thinking as the conversation is unfolding. So let me try to do that. Let me try to put into words what some people may be saying to us now, if not verbally or in a written way later on, in their own minds. They've listened to you for two days. And these have been

wonderful programs that I think are extremely helpful. But what about the person who is saying and thinking, and I'm going to role play with you now. "You don't understand, Lysa, I have been absolutely devastated by this man, or whoever it is. He doesn't care about me. And he's gone on with his life and I'm the one that's left shattered. And I can't get beyond it. I've tried to forgive and I just can't. What do I do now?"

Lysa TerKeurst:

Well, I would first say, I really am so sorry that that happened to you. It was wrong. And it shouldn't have happened to you. And it really isn't supposed to be that way for you. And I am so, so sorry. But friend, I can tell you that the more our pain consumes us, the more it will control us. And when we refuse to sever the source of suffering by the power of forgiveness, when we refuse forgiveness, that's us signing up to be hurt doubly because of what's been done to us. And there's been enough hurt. That offender, they hurt you when they did what they did. But it is possible for you to be hurt, but not to live hurt.

So don't sign up to be hurt twice by them. Your life is too beautiful. Your heart is too amazing of a place to be filled with bitterness, and anger, and rage and thoughts of revenge. And your life, there is beauty to be discovered on the other side of this. You deserve to stop suffering because of what's been done to you. Sever the source of that suffering through the power of forgiveness. Receive God's forgiveness for anything that you need to receive forgiveness for. And as God's forgiveness flows to you, let it flow through you. God will do the hard work. You just cooperate with Him.

Dr. Dobson:

You're right on target there. If a person won't forgive, he or she will not heal. It won't happen. Forgiveness is not only the right thing to do. It's the healthy thing. And when you get beyond the bitterness and the anger that consumes you, you start to recover. The word of God is like that. What is demanded of us and seems impossible at one point, always turns out to be what's best for us.

Lysa TerKeurst:

That's right. And at the end of my book, I have two pages. It's called The Beauty of Forgiving. And in one of the parts of that, I wrote, "You've got much too much going for you to be stunted by anger, haunted by resentment, or held back by fear. Grow into God's grace by giving it kindly and accepting it freely. Then throw your arms up in victory and declare 'I'm free to forgive so that I can live.' Do it once. Do it twice. Do it 70 times seven, make it an undeniable fact that you are indeed bound one day for heaven. This forgiveness message you dare to declare is evidence of Jesus in you that not one soul can deny."

Dr. Dobson:

That's good. Well, we'll close with this. What's the status of your marital relationship with each other? Has the marriage healed? Is there togetherness now? Did you get beyond his unfaithfulness? Or are you just living together because the Lord told you so?

Lysa TerKeurst:

Well, we're not living together because the Lord told us to do so. We actually are healing and we are doing good. And I am so grateful. And I think that our relationship today is different. And it's a beautiful kind of different, because

we've both made peace with the fact that I'm not the saint and he's not the sinner. We're both humans that desperately need God every day and who have been given the opportunity to love, and so we do.

Dr. Dobson: Well, Lysa TerKeurst, your two recent books are very good. They're helping many people come to terms with their inflicted pain, even if it has been stored deep inside for many years. The two titles are, *It's Not Supposed To Be This Way* and *Forgiving What You Can't Forget*. Tell everyone how they can find you.

Lysa TerKeurst: Yeah. So, you can go to ForgivingWhatYouCantForget.com and find out more information about the book. Or you can go onto Instagram. You can find me @LysaTerKeurst. And of course, my name's a little odd. It's spelled L-Y-S-A. And then just put a T there, L-Y-S-A, and you'll find me. It'll pop up. And I'd love to connect with you there.

Dr. Dobson: We've got one minute left. Talk about Proverbs 31.

Lysa TerKeurst: Absolutely. You can find out more information about Proverbs 31 Ministries and all the many ways that we help people know the truth and live the truth, because we're absolutely convinced it changes everything. So you can just go to Proverbs31.org, and we'll be right there with some encouragement, a lot of Bible teaching, and a pretty stellar podcast of our own. And we'd love to meet you there.

Dr. Dobson: How broad is the impact of Proverbs 31?

Lysa TerKeurst: It's actually worldwide now. And that shocks me more than anybody, but we've got almost 70 employees that work really hard every day to get the good news of Jesus out into the world and the truth of the Bible that can change lives. And we work hard at it every single day. And it's a joy to do it.

Dr. Dobson: Thank you, Lysa, for being with us these two days. We'll do it again.

Lysa TerKeurst: Thank you, Dr. Dobson. It's such an honor to be with you.

Dr. Dobson: God be with you.

Roger Marsh: Forgiveness must be a crucial part of every believer's walk. If we don't forgive those who sin against us, how can we expect God to forgive our sins? A sober point to remember from Dr. Dobson's two-part conversation with author Lysa TerKeurst, here on Family Talk. For additional information on any of our guests this month, by the way, go to the broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. And be sure to join us again tomorrow, on New Year's Day, as we conclude our 2020 best-of-broadcast retrospective. I'm Roger Marsh. Have a blessed day, and happy New Year!

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

Roger Marsh:

Hello everyone, I'm Roger Marsh for the James Dobson Family Institute. To help reinforce our ministry during the Winter months, a gracious friend has blessed us with a matching grant. That means that every donation we receive between now and the end of 2020 will be doubled until we've reached our goal! Won't you consider partnering with us? Now, there are numerous ways you can pledge your support. First, you can make a donation online by going to drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. You can also make a donation over the phone when you call 877-732-6825. Again, that number is 877-732-6825. And finally, you can mail a gift directly to our ministry headquarters. Send your donation to The Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, CO 80949-9000. Again, that address is The Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, CO 80949-9000. Thanks so much for giving, and for praying for Dr. Dobson and the ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.