



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Faith Must Be Tough – Part 1

**Guest(s):** Dr. James Dobson

**Air Date:** June 18, 2025

Dr. James Dobson: Hello, everyone you're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm James Dobson, and thank you for joining us for this program.

Roger Marsh: Well welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. You know, in today's world it seems like everywhere we turn, our faith is being challenged. The culture grows more hostile towards Christian values with each passing day. But here's the question we need to ask ourselves: how do we remain strong when everything else around us seems to be pushing against what we believe? Well today on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we're bringing you a timeless message from our own Dr. James Dobson that addresses this very issue. The good news about biblical principles is that they are in fact timeless, and the presentation you're about to hear was recorded many, many years ago. In fact, back in 1983, Dr. Dobson spoke to his home church in Pasadena, California about what it means to develop spiritual toughness and resilience. His words were prophetic then and they're even more prophetic today as we navigate these challenging times here in 2025. Over the next couple of programs, we're going to share his complete presentation titled "Faith Must Be Tough." And now, let's listen in to part one of this powerful presentation from Dr. James Dobson on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: We have such memories in this church. Shirley and I have been members of this church for 22 years, having come here as just babies, of course, and we have enjoyed the long-term relationships that have been here. Those memories are precious to me. Our children have been born since we've been here, they were dedicated at this altar, and of course, we love so many of you, so it's a great privilege and a great honor to be here. I want to tell you something else.

It's a great honor and a satisfaction for me to be able to speak just five minutes from my home. Now, I'm not doing an awful lot of speaking these days because I prefer to stay home, and one of the reasons I don't speak too much is because I don't like to travel. I don't like to catch planes, I don't like to fly across the country, I am very much affected by changes of time zones, jet lag, that kind of thing, and I just find it disorienting to whip back and forth across the country, and it's a pleasure to be able to speak just five minutes from my own home. I remember a day not too long ago where I was flying across the country, and I got into a snowstorm and the plane was rerouted, had to change planes, I

changed about three or four time zones in the course of the day, and bounced across the United States, and when you do that, you travel that fast, you start to lose all orientation to time and space, and that happened to me, and I flew in that evening, finally arriving in San Francisco, and a man picked me up there at the airport, and I was making small talk with him, and I said, "Now, just how long have you lived here in Portland?" He thought I was a bit strange, I'm sure.

He took me on to the hotel, I checked in, went to bed. Next morning, a wake-up call came at 5:00 in the morning, and pierced the night, I sat up in bed, and I looked around, and I didn't recognize anything. Have you ever done that? I couldn't remember how I got there, what I was supposed to do there, and I was confused about what had happened to me the day before, and I was sitting there in bed, trying to figure it all out, and I was immediately reminded of a story that Harry Truman told a number of years ago, about a man who was very ill, and the doctors thought he died, and they shipped him off to a mortuary, and they put him in a casket, and the fellow woke up about 3:00 in the morning in this silky thing, and he sat up and he looked around, and he said, "If I'm alive, what am I doing in this thing, and if I'm dead, how come I have to go to the bathroom?" Folks, I ask myself both those questions on that occasion. So believe me, it was a pleasure to sleep in my own bed last night, and I have a pretty good grasp of where I am at this moment in the time and place.

Now, those of you who were in the Centurion Sunday school class and later, the Disciples class for 10 years, when I was a teacher of those classes, know that I have a personal love for the study of astronomy. I've felt that way ever since I was a small child. I've just been awestruck by what God created up there, and it amazes me that very few people stop to even think about it. Folks, do you realize that when you look up at night and you see all those stars, that God showed to Abraham, that you're only looking at a small portion of our little local galaxy? There are a hundred billion stars in it, and it's 100,000 light years across.

In other words, light traveling at 186,000 miles a second takes 100,000 years to cross it. Astronomy fascinates me. The main reason it does is because with David. The heavens declare, declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. You can't look at it and study it without seeing the handiwork of God, and what excites me about all that is that it strengthens my faith, see, because the God who created all that and keeps it in perfect order is a friend of mine, and He can handle little problems that I give Him, and I draw a great deal of satisfaction from that.

Well, in the course of my study of astronomy, not too long ago, I was reading about a man named Dr. Stephen Hawking. He is the man that has done most of the mathematical computations on which the understanding of space, and especially the black hole in space and other astronomical phenomenon is based. Very interesting man, but he has what's called ALS syndrome or Lou Gehrig's disease. Dr. Hawking is afflicted with this terminal disorder that totally debilitates the nervous system and leaves one unable to move, and eventually, asphyxiation occurs because the body can't even carry on its functions and you

can't breathe. He is in the latter stages of that disease, and the man sits in a wheelchair now with his head hanging to one side.

He cannot comb his hair, he can't feed himself, he can't move, he can't write, and he can only speak with the most labored effort. People that listen to him think that he's said an entire paragraph, and they don't understand him. Those that do comprehend him know that he's only uttered one sentence. He has to work so hard to get his ideas across. Yet, that man sits in a wheelchair all day and thinks, and he works out mathematical equations in his mind.

At the end of the day, he dictates formulas to his secretary, and that's how he does his work, which I'm told is tantamount to Beethoven, composing an entire symphony in his head, and then dictating it at the end of the day. But I saw an interview of Dr. Stephen Hawking not too long ago about his disorder and his disease, and he made some incredible statements. He said, "Before I became ill, I was bored with life, disinterested in my work." He said, "I drank too much, I smoked too much," but he said, "Then, it was suddenly taken from me, and I saw I was going to lose it," and he said, "Everything became new." Then, he uttered this quote.

He said, "When your expectations for life are reduced to zero, everything becomes meaningful." Everything takes on new meaning. Looking at a tree, or a sunset, or getting up in the morning and taking a walk, or a friendship, all those things that we take for granted before become meaningful when your expectations are reduced to zero, when you expect nothing. When your expectations for life are incredibly high, then it takes nothing to make you depressed. In other words, our emotional stability is wrapped up in what we expect from life, and I see such relevance to us in this context, especially America at this time.

If there's a message that I believe America needs to hear, it has to do with what we expect out of life. I think we feel almost entitled by some kind of divine decree to 72 years of bliss with very few frustrations and very few inconveniences, and very little stress, and very little difficulty, and therefore, the gap between life as it is and life as it ought to be, sends us into torrents of emotion and frustration, and you can see it all around you. In my counseling experience, and I don't want to trivialize some of the problems that have been brought to me, but people complain about the most minor of problems. Three cloudy days in a row is enough to bring on depression, or frustration over the fact that, "The boss doesn't appreciate what I do," "I don't like my job," or, "My car won't run," or, "I have a grouchy mother-in-law." It doesn't matter what it is.

You can have everything good, everything right, and one thing bugs you, one thing frustrating, and it's like the weakest link in a chain. That one thing becomes so great. Now, folks, I am really not able to analyze where an entire country is, and it's dangerous to try to do that, but I think I see an emotional vulnerability, a softness in Americans at this time. The best example of it maybe is, or at least one example of it can be seen in the mid-'70s, when we had the

gasoline shortage, and people were having to wait in line to buy gasoline. Minor frustration, minor thing, and yet, people were tremendously agitated by losing that 45 minutes, and out here in California, people were killing one another.

You remember stabbing each other and having fights and all kinds of conflicts? Of course, that's California, and California's a little different from the rest of the world. Someone said the other day that the founding fathers tipped the country up on end, and everything loose slid to California. Yeah. But I think I see a mental softness and emotional softness contrast that, if you will, to how the Germans reacted in 1945 near the end of the war.

At that time, folks, if you'll recall, the British were bombing them by the day, and the Americans were bombing them at night. 24 hours a day, bombs were raining out of the sky on them. Their homes were shattered, their cities were burned by these firestorms that swept back and forth. Their water supply was polluted, the sewage was running in the streets. There was no food, the little children were ragged, the fathers were dead, the fathers were gone, the brothers were gone.

80% of the men who were born in 1922 were dead by that point. A whole generation of young people were wiped out, and the people were groveling in the streets, trying to maintain some semblance of order. And would you believe, by the end of the war in 1945, the Germans were still producing 80% of what they did in 1941? They did not crack. They did not crumble.

They hung tough under the most difficult of circumstances, and whether you like their political system or not, and we all don't, you still have to admire them for the courage that they showed in the midst of the greatest adversity. At the same time that that was going on in Germany, something similar was happening in England. In 1941, as you know, London was being bombed, the blitz was on, the city was being torn to shreds, the children had been sent to the north of England to try to get them out of the air raids, families were spread apart, husbands were at sea. It was an awful time. The most awful part of it, however, was not that their cities were being bombed, but it was the awareness that the German army was right over there across the English Channel.

They expected them to invade any day, and it looked like their beloved country was gone. Their thousand-year history, nearly 2,000-year history was about to blow apart, and they were going to be under the hobnail boot of the Nazis and the Gestapo. Right at that most incredible dark hour, someone got ahold of some hope and some courage, and wrote a song that's now part of my childhood. I wonder how many of you all remember the song, "The White Cliffs of Dover?" Can I see your hands?

It's surprising, all us old folks, right? Right from within the oppression of war. Listen to the words of it. They said, "There'll be bluebirds over the white cliffs of Dover tomorrow, just you wait and see. There'll be love and laughter and peace ever after tomorrow, when the world is free."

"The shepherd will tend his sheep, and the valley will bloom again, and Jimmy will go to sleep in his own little room again." Going to bring the children back. "There'll be bluebirds over the white cliffs of Dover tomorrow, just you wait and see." See, that's an expression of courage and hope right in the most difficult horrors of war. Same thing was going on in Russia at the same time.

If you want to read heroism, read about what happened in Leningrad with the Germans surrounding the city, and for two years, having no food, the people were starving to death, but they didn't surrender. There was toughness there. Now, what am I saying, that the Germans and the Russians and the English are made out of better stuff than we? Certainly not. What I'm saying is that adversity breeds toughness, and prosperity, like we've had for 30 years in this country, breeds softness.

It's a law of nature. I could stand here for two hours and talk about the animal world, and how those animals in captivity change. They're not able to adapt, they're not as tough. It's true in the plant world. You can plant a tree in a rainforest, which has plenty of water, doesn't have to go looking for it, and its roots stay on the surface.

It doesn't have to send them down in order to find water. As a result, it can be blown over by the first windstorm that comes along. It's not strong. You plant a mesquite tree in the arid desert, and it has to send its roots down 30 feet or more to find water, and that thing is so strong, nothing can blow it over, because it grows in a hostile environment. Now, folks, if that's true of animals and plants, it is very true of us and it's especially true of us spiritually, and I see a real concern at this point.

There's no better example of it than what's going on in Europe at this time. You're aware that Europe is divided into East and West, and the East is behind the Iron Curtain, and the Christians that are behind the Iron Curtain are under incredible oppression and hostility. They can't find Bibles, they can't find materials, tapes. I'm working with an organization right now to try to get materials to them. They can't get them.

You have to smuggle them in, or you have to make some kind of deal with the governments to get them in there. Their leaders have been executed. Their leaders have been put in prison. Many times, one pastor who has not been to seminary has eight or 10 congregations that he circulates around, and those congregations have to meet in private. Great oppression on those people in Eastern Europe.

In Western Europe, by contrast, they are free. For the most part, they can worship where they want to, they can stand on the street corner, and they can talk about their faith, Bibles are everywhere, seminaries are everywhere, authorities on the Bible are everywhere. Isn't it strange, folks, that there are more Christians in East Europe than West Europe? There are more Christians behind the Iron Curtain than there are in the freedom of the West, and they're

tougher, and they believe it more, and they live it more because there is this principle of life. Now, as I read the Bible, I am absolutely convinced of one thing, and I have not heard this said, nor have I read it, but I believe it. God wants His people to be tough.

Audience: Amen.

Dr. James Dobson: And if you want evidence of that, look in the Old Testament at the children of Israel, and they're heading out into the desert, and it's hot, and it's dry, and they don't have enough water to drink, much less enough to bathe in, and they're frustrated by that, and I don't blame them. You ever been thirsty? You know what it's like to be thirsty, and they had to eat this manna for 40 years? I mean, the Lord did a great miracle, and I'm not being irreverent about that, but folks, manna for 40 years. Have you ever had Thanksgiving turkey four days in a row?

Do you remember how you start to feel about turkey after about four days? They ate manna for 40 years, and there's not many ways you can cook manna, and they got frustrated about it, and they started complaining, and I doubt if there's a person in this auditorium who wouldn't have been bellyaching about life on the desert. They didn't know where they were going, their lives were in danger, and they complained about it. But let's see how the Lord reacted to that. In Numbers 11, He said, "Now the people became like those who complain of adversity." I thought we were supposed to complain in the face of adversity. "Now the people became like those who complain of adversity in the hearing of the Lord, and when the Lord heard it, His anger was kindled, and the fire of the Lord burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp." In other words, the Lord was saying to them, "You are My people, and I have you in the palm of My hand, and I'm doing a mighty miracle with you, and I don't want you groaning and complaining about it." God was offended by the reaction of the people. Well, you say, "That was the Old Testament, and we're given a little different view of God in the Old Testament, and He's not really quite that way in the New Testament," and I think that God does not change, and I don't believe that.

He's the God of the New Testament too, and I see the same thing there. I see Jesus in the boat with the disciples on the sea, and He's asleep. Now, this was not a big yacht, you know. This was a little fishing boat, and a storm came up, and these disciples began to get kind of scared about it because they were fishermen and they'd been on the sea, and they knew very well what a storm can do to a little boat and its inhabitants, and they were frightened. Would you and I also have been frightened?

When they woke Jesus up in panic and said, "Lord, Lord, we're about to drowned," and He looked at them and rebuked them, and He said, "O ye of little faith," which is another way of saying, "Come on, boys, you're acting cowardly." I see it all through. I see Jesus the night before He was put on the cross, and He's gone off to pray, and He asked the disciples to stay awake and watch. These men had been under great stress. Their lives were in danger.

You know what that does to you emotionally. They were tired. It was the middle of the night. Have you ever tried to sit and stare off into the darkness in the middle of the night? And they tried to do it, and they couldn't do it.

They couldn't stay awake, and Jesus came back and was upset at them for going to sleep, 'cause He wanted them to be tough. Rebuked them. If you want the best example of it in the Bible, I think look at the second half of the 11th chapter of Hebrews, where those people suffered every form of difficulty, and they're called heroes because of the way they suffered, the way they took it, sawn asunder, went without food, didn't have proper clothing. That theme is throughout the Bible. God wants us tough.

Now, why? Why do you suppose the Lord wants us to be tough? Is it because He wants us to be phony machos that grin and bear it, conceal our real feelings, whistle in the dark? See, He wants us to be like the duck that sits on the water, and He's perfectly composed above the water, and He's paddling like crazy underneath. Is that what the Lord wants of us, to hide it, hold it inside?

I don't think so. If you look at the Psalms, David expressed his greatest frustrations to the Lord, and God accepted it. I love the Psalm that says, "He knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust, and as a father pitieth his, the Lord pitties those that fear Him." No, I don't think He's asking us to be phonies, asking us to try to put on some face that's not real. Furthermore, let me add this. Furthermore, I think the Lord understands that we vary in temperament, and we vary in our ability to withstand pressure. We react differently to adversity. The same boiling water that softens the carrot hardens the egg, and some people respond to adversity by getting tougher, and some go to pieces. The Lord understands that. He knows that.

Roger Marsh:

You've been listening to a very powerful message from Dr. James Dobson on this special edition of Family Talk. It's a message titled "Faith Must Be Tough" and it's a message that reminds us that spiritual strength isn't built in comfort; it's actually forged through adversity. Now if you missed any part of today's program, remember you can hear it again at [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk), and be sure to join us again next time to hear the conclusion of this powerful presentation here on the Family Talk broadcast. You know, as we face mounting pressures against biblical values in our society, the work of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute has never been more important. We are committed to equipping families with the spiritual resources they need to weather any storm. Through broadcasts like today's for example, we're helping parents raise children who won't waver when their faith is in fact tested; strengthening marriages to withstand cultural attacks, and to encouraging believers to live out their convictions with courage. Right now, we have a special June matching grant in place and that means your partnership will have twice the impact. Several generous ministry friends have pledged to match every donation dollar for dollar through Monday, June 30. That's less than two weeks from now. That means your \$100 donation becomes \$200; a \$250 donation becomes \$500; a \$20,000 donation becomes \$40,000. Regardless of how much you donate to

Family Talk during the month of June, we will double your investment in families who need biblical truth and encouragement thanks to this dollar for dollar matching grant. Now you can make a secure donation online at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). You can also call in your donation to our constituent care team at 877-732-6825. And keep in mind that when you make a donation of any amount today, we will thank you for that contribution by sending you a copy of Dr. Dobson's book called *Your Legacy* along with the companion DVD. Request your copy of these resources and double your impact through this June matching grant when you go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) or when you call 877-732-6825.

Well I'm Roger Marsh. On behalf of Dr. Dobson and all of us here at the JDFI, thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time right here for part two of Dr. James Dobson's special presentation on how faith must be tough. That's coming up here next time right here on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust, for the family you love.

Announcer:

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