



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** What Men Need to Know About Women – Part 1

**Guest(s):** Jeff and Shaunti Feldhahn

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Dr. James 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.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. You know, strong marriages are built on understanding, and yet research shows that many couples struggle to truly connect because they communicate in fundamentally different ways. It's not that husbands don't love their wives, they often just don't know how to express it in ways that she will receive.

Well, on today's edition of Family Talk, we're exploring breakthrough insights about how men can better understand and communicate with the women they love. Our guests today are best-selling authors Jeff and Shanti Feldhahn, a husband and wife team who spent nearly two decades researching the differences in how men and women think, feel, and process emotions. Shaunti Feldhahn's book *For Women Only* opened countless eyes to how men think, and now, they're sharing equally powerful revelations in the book *For Men Only*, a straightforward guide to the inner lives of women. Through extensive research, including focus groups and national surveys, the Feldhahns have discovered the miscommunication often stems from different emotional wiring. They'll share why women need reassurance in ways that surprise many men, and how wives process conflict differently than their husbands. They'll also look at how simple actions can transform a marriage. So here now is our host, psychologist and best-selling author Dr. James Dobson, to introduce our guests, Jeff and Shaunti Feldhahn, here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Shaunti Feldhahn has a BS in government and economics from the College of William and Mary, and an MA in public policy from Harvard University. Before she began writing, she was an analyst of Wall Street and had held numerous public policy positions. She's a mother of two, and Shaunti, it's good to see you again.

Shaunti Feldhahn: It's great to be back.

Dr. James Dobson: Jeff, good to have you here. Jeff has a juris doctorate from Harvard Law school and has worked as an attorney in New York and Atlanta. He was a founding

partner of SBS Legal Services, a virtual law firm, and he is the former founder and president of World2one, a tech company, and now he's a speaker and an author, and we're delighted to have you with us.

Jeff Feldhahn: Great to be here.

Dr. James Dobson: You played a role in writing this second book. You didn't the first one, right?

Jeff Feldhahn: It's correct. Other than being the subject matter.

Dr. James Dobson: How was it that you got pulled into this one?

Jeff Feldhahn: It was one of those things that it needed to be written in a man's voice, in an average guy's voice, and I'm just an average guy.

Dr. James Dobson: Ah, well there's a lot of good information in this book and Shaunti, so good to have you back.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Great to be here.

Dr. James Dobson: Your first book took you on quite a ride, didn't it?

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yes, it did. Sort of a rocket ship. I felt like I just had to strap in and hang on. It's been fabulous.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you ever believe that that book would take off like that?

Shaunti Feldhahn: Are you kidding? It's been fun.

Dr. James Dobson: The reason it did is because you touched a nerve. You taught women how men think.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Stuff they didn't know.

Dr. James Dobson: They really didn't know. Isn't it amazing? We live together, we're husbands and wives, most of us, and yet, we really don't understand our spouses.

Shaunti Feldhahn: I had been married for almost 10 years when I started doing the research, and there were so many things I realized were absolutely foundational that I did not get about my husband, and I realized, whoa, most of us women don't know this about our men.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. Now, what we're going to talk about this time is not a how a man thinks, but how a woman thinks. Jeff, that's where you come in.

Jeff Feldhahn: It is.

Dr. James Dobson: In writing the sequel, the other half to Shaunti's first book. Why did you agree to do that?

Jeff Feldhahn: That's a good question, and I haven't really got an answer or had an answer over the time but I'm glad I did it. It's one of those things that when they ask me to write along with Shaunti, I had two real reservations. One was, I don't know if any guy will ever read it, for one thing. Even if the content is great.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Because it's a relationship book.

Jeff Feldhahn: It's a relationship book. Guys don't read these sorts of things. The second is, I really think that most women can't be understood. I mean, I said to her, "They're really kind of random."

Shaunti Feldhahn: I went, "Excuse me?"

Jeff Feldhahn: Those were my reservations.

Dr. James Dobson: In fact, one of you wrote in the new book, which I have here, *For Men Only: A Straight Forward Guide to the Inner Lives of Women*. You wrote that a woman is like a swamp?

Jeff Feldhahn: That would be me.

Dr. James Dobson: And you're gonna get in trouble for doing that.

Shaunti Feldhahn: He got in trouble.

Jeff Feldhahn: Probably not a great choice of analogies. It was more of along the lines of Shaunti said, "No, women aren't random. We're firm terrain that can be mapped." I said, "If you ask most guys, we'll probably say not firm terrain, more like a swamp." Every guy knows when they venture into a swamp, sooner or later you're going to step into quicksand. Once that happens, the best thing to do is not to struggle.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Just shut down.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Well, when Shaunti was here before she, she made the point that many women are clueless about what the man is thinking, and how he thinks. You're saying the same thing is true about men, that they are pretty clueless about women.

Jeff Feldhahn: You know, I think overriding, men love their wives. They really do. But they really don't know how to communicate it in a way that is effective with their wives because they just don't think that they can understand them. They feel perplexed by them.

Dr. James Dobson: So you believe there are some straightforward principles and conditions that men could understand if they just took the time to do it?

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah, and part of it is, they haven't ever had that tool, I don't think. Many men have not ever been approached with this. You have this assumption, and I hate to tell you, buddy, but it's wrong. Your wife can be understood and here's the principles, and here's a couple of simple things that you can do that can change everything.

Jeff Feldhahn: That's the important thing right there. That it is really simple. It's not splitting the atom. It isn't. It's what I thought.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Which is what you thought originally.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, where did you get your information, Jeff? I mean, obviously a lot of it came from Shaunti, but where else did you find it?

Jeff Feldhahn: Well, we approached the exact same way that she approached the *For Women Only* book, and that was we conducted focus groups to find out what were the questions. I was basically in all of those focus groups with all of these women. I was the surprise meter. I was, as I refer to myself, I was the embedded male, and I was just there to figure it out and-

Dr. James Dobson: Were they all women?

Jeff Feldhahn: They were all women. What we did was we took those questions, those surprises, and then we-

Shaunti Feldhahn: Tested them. We did a big national survey just like we did in *For Women Only*. A scientific survey to help prove to the guys that this truly is common to all women. Your wife is not just weird. This is very common.

Dr. James Dobson: But she is very different from him.

Jeff Feldhahn: Very different, and it's odd. We as guys would not expect our wife to bench press the same amount of weight that we can bench press at the gym. Yet somehow when it comes to emotional things, I just assumed that she was processing things the same way that I do it. She doesn't.

Dr. James Dobson: All right, go to the heart of it. What's the first thing you learned?

Jeff Feldhahn: I think the most critical issue is that in almost every woman that was surveyed, there is this underlying insecurity about whether or not their husband really loves them or will continue loving them. For a guy that's a foreign concept to me. When we got married, I knew that Shaunti loved me, and it doesn't arise in my mind anymore. Even when we have a conflict, I don't think that she's stopped loving me. But that's not necessarily the case with women.

Shaunti Feldhahn: It's so interesting, and this is one of these cases where when we started comparing notes with other women, what I heard a lot from some of my girlfriends was, I thought this was just me. Instead the survey said, this is 80% of women. They could be secure in their relationship. They can have a great relationship, but underlying that there is this latent insecurity that asks the question, "does he really love me?" When that insecurity is triggered, when you two have an argument, that insecurity rises up and it becomes this kind of gut twisting, "are we okay?" That to a guy is so foreign, like why would we have a problem just because we had an argument?

Jeff Feldhahn: We went off to work.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah, you go off to work, you shut it off, and you go about your day. For the woman, she can't. It's there sort of really bothering her and what she needs, what we sort of tell the guys because they're all about, "Just tell me what to do about it." What we tell the guys is all that she needs is to be reassured. That is all that she's looking for, to give her the peace that, "Honey, I'm mad, yes, but we're okay." That will allow a woman just to sort of settle and say, "Okay, we can have the space here."

Dr. James Dobson: I'm tracking you in this regard, very carefully as I think about our early years, because Shirley was a very successful college student. She was one of the most popular girls in school. She just had a lot of confidence and yet she was insecure at this point. We had gone together for three years. She knew I loved her. There was no question about that. Yet there were times when it surprised me that she needed reassurance about that. If we ever did kind of have a little fuss, we never really did fight a lot, but we had a little fuss. I could go to sleep. I could just go to bed, go to sleep, we'll talk about it in the morning. She'd lie there all night, and finally she'd reach over and hit me and say, "You will talk to me about this." It was a very different thing.

Shaunti Feldhahn: It's so foreign to the men, and there's so many ramifications for this really, because what it means for a guy is that the way your wife needs to be approached, when you suspect that maybe that insecurity has been triggered, is totally different from the way you need to be approached. Like, for example, if, if Jeff and I, not that we ever have arguments, ever. But on those rare occasions, right? When we do, if we're mad and he sees me being just fuming, what's the guy thing to do? You see another man being upset, you do the honorable thing, and you give the other man space. What we're telling the guys is your wife doesn't need space, that insecurity has been triggered. She needs a hug, and it's just learning something completely that you didn't know before.

Jeff Feldhahn: For us guys, I think what we need to do is have an analogy that works kind of for us. If you think of most guys, we're wired to provide. If you ask most guys, "How secure do you feel in your job?" A lot of guys will say, "Well, I've had a good couple of years, but the industry could go south. If I'm honest, I could be three or four mistakes away from losing a big client and getting fired." Women have told us that that's how we sometimes feel about our relationships. We can be

three or four arguments away from things going bad. That's the same feeling. So we can understand...

Dr. James Dobson: It's not rational though.

Jeff Feldhahn: No, it isn't.

Dr. James Dobson: It's not based on any evidence. It's a feeling, right, Shaunti?

Shaunti Feldhahn: It's a feeling, and really, honestly, I think that this ties back to the fall, and it really ties back to the way that the curse affected men and women differently. That passage in Genesis talking about your desire will be for your husband, and he will have a tendency to rule over you. So many theologians talk about that, of the women constantly sort of looking to her husband for that reassurance that you love me, and it's really, that's what it feels like. It's not necessarily rational. You all, you men, never necessarily question. You sign the marriage document. You walk down the aisle. You do this. You never think about, "Does my wife love me?" But that is a foreign concept to us women.

Dr. James Dobson: How in the world did the apostle Paul understand this? I mean, in Ephesians 5, he says, "husbands," what?

Jeff Feldhahn: Love your wives.

Dr. James Dobson: Love your wives.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Wives, what?

Shaunti Feldhahn: Respect your husbands.

Dr. James Dobson: Respect your husband. Now, when you were here before and in your first book, the centerpiece word was respect.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Here the bottom line is love.

Shaunti Feldhahn: What we are finding, though, with guys, most guys know that they need to love their wife. The thing that we've heard over and over is that they sort of feel like "I'm trying, but it's not getting through. It's not being perceived." One of our friends said, "It's like I'm a radio tower, and I'm broadcasting, but she's not got the same frequency or something. She's not receiving it." That's basically what we are breaking down in the book, and all these different surprises, the principles, as you put it, of that guys just tend not to realize. It's so stinking simple once you actually just have a few pieces of information.

Jeff Feldhahn: On that reassurance point, guys, you have to come back after you've had that argument. You say, "I just need some space." You do have to come back and resolve those things, but for the most part, it's a lot of the little things. It's not the Herculean tasks that we guys think, and we can sometimes paralyze ourselves into thinking, "I can't show her how much I love her. I can't plan that romantic getaway every weekend." It's paralyzing. Yet, what they're really asking for is that 30 second voicemail in the week or a few days in the week, or that little card that you drop on their seat of their car before she gets in to go to work.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Post-It note, even.

Jeff Feldhahn: Post-It note. Just something that says, "You're such a great wife. I'm so fortunate to be your husband," and it's easy stuff.

Dr. James Dobson: If it's sincere.

Jeff Feldhahn: Yeah.

Shaunti Feldhahn: One of the things that we talk about is that the two things over and over that we kept seeing in this area of reassurance and this insecurity that even secure women have, is that when that insecurity is triggered, reassure her, and in all other times learn what these little things are that is the little pursuit day after day, which is what prevents a lot of the insecurity from being triggered. It is so funny when you talk to women, and you ask the average woman, and I was saying, "Does your husband ever, for example, just leave you a voicemail during the day, 20 seconds just to say, 'Oh, honey, I love you so much and that thing you did with the kids yesterday, you're such a great mom. Got to go.'" I asked one woman this and she said, "Yes, my husband, he did that two months ago. I have saved that voicemail. I replay it. Oh, that just made me feel so good." Jeff and I realize, if the husband heard his wife say that, he'd probably be shocked that it had this big impact. Little thing, big impact.

Dr. James Dobson: It would not occur to him that that would be that important to her. That is kind of a bottom line explanation for what you're trying to say there, but it's not the whole story.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Not by any means.

Dr. James Dobson: Where do we go from there?

Shaunti Feldhahn: There's another issue that this one leads into. There's a whole other principle that is a big surprise to guys because of the way, the differences in how men and women are wired and how we process thoughts and emotions. All right? This is a silly example, but I think every guy has seen this at work, and it is, for example, we say guys are sort of like a computer desktop with one window open at a time. That's kind of how you process your thoughts and your feelings.

You got one window open, you work on the whatever it is. You click the X, you close it, you're done. You move onto the next thing.

We women, we're like a computer with 10 windows open all at once, and we're thinking about all these different things and jumping back and forth between them. We've got a lot going on in our brain at any one time and...

Dr. James Dobson: A lot of it is a feeling content. It is not situational. It is just how they feel about it.

Jeff Feldhahn: To complicate matters, their computer desktop, and you might get letters on this one, but it's almost as if it's been infected with some sort of spyware, and that advertisement that pops up, you don't want it to pop up, and you click the X but it keeps popping back up over and over again.

Shaunti Feldhahn: You can't close it.

Jeff Feldhahn: They experience that.

Shaunti Feldhahn: That is basically one of the things we tell guys is that, "you know when your wife is being bothered by something, if there's something that has invaded her thoughts, what is the classic guy response? Just don't think about it, honey. Just don't let it bother you. What we tested on the survey, what the vast majority of women said is, "I have no idea what you're talking about. Just don't let it bother you," because we're clicking the X, and it's not going anywhere. We can't just not think about things. We have to take some action to resolve them.

Dr. James Dobson: They do not want to be told that this is not all that significant at this point and that a week or two from now you won't even remember it, and you're overplaying it or it may be the wrong time of the month or any other, you get into deep water right there, don't you?

Jeff Feldhahn: Real deep.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Shaunti Feldhahn: One of the things that we tell the guys is realize, because your wife is just not wired like you are, she just can't click the X and close it. For example, we talk about, suppose you have an argument over breakfast in the morning. You can go off to work, click the X and work on your day, and it's not bothering you. You sort of figure you'll deal with it later at some appropriate time. For your wife, it's popping back up and invading your consciousness throughout the day. It's that stirring in the gut, painful. So, the thing that we always sort of tell the guys is what your wife really needs is to have sort of, and this sounds kind of funny, but sort of your permission to say, "You know what? If this is really going to bother you, honey, let's talk about it or let's deal with it," and that'll help her resolve



the issue and move on. It's just we have a completely different way of working it.

Dr. James Dobson: There are guys listening to us right now who really still don't understand what in the world you're talking about. I mean, Jeff, did you get it? You had these focus groups; you had people around the table. How'd they get that across to you?

Jeff Feldhahn: Oh, it took months. It took months.

Dr. James Dobson: It sounds like a pretty simple principle.

Jeff Feldhahn: It sounds simple in principle now, but it really wasn't because it's foreign to the way we think. The other thing is quite honestly with most guys, when their wife raises that question about how you did something, we run it through the filter of she's not respecting me, she doesn't trust me, that I know what's best. Our kids are going to be okay. You know what we need to do? We need to just banish that assumption from our thinking in that in most cases she's not questioning your ability or your judgment. What is happening is that this is an open window as we talk about it, and it's really bothering and annoying to her, and it's not your ego that's at stake.

Dr. James Dobson: Jeff, what do you say when men say in response to this, "What you're really telling me is that women are emotional babies, and I don't want to cater to that, and get over it." I'm sure there are many men that say that.

Jeff Feldhahn: There are. What the fact of the matter is, you deal with the reality of the world in which we live, and I want peace in my household. I want my wife to be built up. I want there to be happiness and joy, and you can stick to your guns all you want and be pretty unhappy with your marriage and your life. Or you can learn to bend and give a little and work with the parameters in which she's wired.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Remember, this is the way God wired us. This is God's decision.

Jeff Feldhahn: I wrote the book *What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women*, and when I first began speaking on that subject, man, I'm telling you, there was anger in that room, and it was not all at me. It was between the husband and wife and to some degree it was at me, because the husband was saying, "What this guy is saying is going to cause me problems when I get home." The wife is thinking, "Yeah, that's what makes me mad." I had to put a lot of humor in. I had to do all kinds of things to keep it from sinking into warfare.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Well, one of the things that we tell both the husbands and the wives actually usually upfront is that the way you guys are going to process this, you as men and as women is totally different. When women hear the things they didn't get about their man, they're like, "Wow, honey, is this true?" It starts this great conversation and "Wow, we haven't talked like this in years." So they feel so close. Well, when the men hear what the women's side of it, the men don't

usually get in the car and talk to their wife and say, "Is this true?" It's like they start processing internally. And they go sort of underground, and they think it out because you men tend to process by thinking it through, not by talking it through, right? So the wife thinks, "He doesn't care about me. He's not talking about this." But usually the guys really truly are getting it. It's just really new information, and they kind of want to practice it and see if it really works. So that's another thing we need to warn your audience.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. What you're saying is after men and women have been to one of your events, and they get out in the car, the conversation begins something like this. The woman says, "Well, what did you think?" He says, "About what?"

Shaunti Feldhahn: That's why we try to set those expectations from the beginning. Don't ask your husband that. Let him process it.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, that's interesting stuff. There is a little brochure, as I've said, in the front of this book that lists seven principles that men need to understand about how women think. So we'd like to discontinue this conversation. We're not there yet. I appreciate you all being here and we'll pick it up next time. Okay?

Jeff Feldhahn: Terrific.

Shaunti Feldhahn: Great.

Roger Marsh: You know, it's fascinating how men and women process these conversations so differently, isn't it? While she is eager to talk it through in the car, he's quietly thinking it over, both genuinely engaged, just in completely different ways. You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and an eye-opening conversation Dr. Dobson had with Jeff and Shaunti Feldhahn about bridging the communication gap between husbands and wives. Now, if you missed any portion of today's broadcast, or if you'd like to share these insights with someone who could benefit from them, visit [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). Once you're there, you'll find complete program information, along with details about all of the Feldhahn's books, including *For Men Only* and *For Women Only*. That's at [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk).

Here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we believe that strong marriages form the foundation of thriving families and healthy communities. When couples learn to truly understand each other, it strengthens not just their relationship, but their family's future. That's why we are dedicated to bringing you conversations like the one you just heard, practical, biblical wisdom that makes a real difference in your home. These broadcasts exist because friends like you recognize the importance of equipping families with God's truth in a culture that often misunderstands or even diminishes marriage. Your support helps us champion the beauty of lifelong commitment and genuine intimacy between husbands and wives. And when you partner with us financially, your tax -deductible donation enables us to continue offering hope and practical

guidance to couples all across America. You can make a donation over the phone when you call 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. You can also send a donation through the U.S. Postal Service. Our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, P.O. Box 39000 Colorado Springs, Colorado. The zip code, 80949.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh and on behalf of Dr. James Dobson and all of us here at Family Talk, thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time for part two of this insightful conversation with Jeff and Shaunti Feldhahn. That's coming up on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust, for the family you love.

Announcer:

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