

An Exciting Announcement

Dwelling Richly Podcast, Season 9/ Special Episode

Hey, welcome back. This is Jennifer, and this is the Dwelling Richly podcast. Today, I'm excited to share a special episode of the podcast. I'm going to tell you a little bit about a surprise I've been hinting at for the past couple of weeks. If you've been listening, you might have caught on that I've got something special coming. Well, today, I'm finally ready to talk about it.

Many of you probably know that my dad was a pastor. Growing up, we were PKs—pastor's kids—for a season. My dad pastored a church in Simi Valley, California, called Simi Valley Bible Church, and we lived in the parsonage of that church. I was younger then, in second grade, and I remember we could walk to church right through our backyard. It was neat because we could also walk to school right down the street. I walked to church on Sundays and to school the other days of the week, and I spent a lot of time in the big community park across the street. Those early years as a pastor's kid in Simi Valley are a distinct part of my childhood.

Before moving to Simi Valley, we lived in San Diego, where I was born. My dad had graduated from Moody Bible Institute and took a position as a youth pastor at a small church there. When we moved to Simi Valley, he became the senior pastor at the little Bible church. My memories of that time are a bit blurry, but I have shared a few specific ones in earlier podcasts. Since my dad passed away in 2016 and my mom in 2019, I've often wished I could ask them about that season of life and learn more about our family's journey.

Fast forward to 1980, and I'm 14 years old. At this point, my dad had left full-time ministry and was a lay pastor. We were attending a small church in Newbury Park, California, called First Baptist Church of Newbury Park. The church still exists today as Grace Baptist Church on Silas Avenue in Newbury Park. I have strong memories of that season in the late 70s and early 80s—being part of the youth group, attending Sunday school classes, and sitting in church. Pastor Jack MacArthur, yes, John MacArthur's father, was the interim pastor there for a while during a pastoral search.

But one of the most cherished memories I have from that time is of my dad and mom teaching the adult Sunday school class. I can vividly picture the room, us sitting on little metal folding chairs, my dad up front with a chalkboard behind him. I was a young teen, and while I may not have paid full attention, I absorbed enough of my dad's teaching—and my mom's as well. I distinctly remember them teaching through Proverbs, with my mom leading a session on Proverbs 31. It was a bit controversial at the time—there were debates on whether women should be teaching Sunday school classes with both men and women present. But, to their credit, and with the support of Pastor Jack MacArthur, my mom was encouraged to teach that class.

Now, fast forward to 2024. With both my mom and dad passed, I've had the responsibility of going through their belongings, as I'm the one local here in California. Their things have been stored in boxes, waiting to be sorted. Life gets busy, and it's hard to find the time to go through it all. But earlier this summer, in June, I finally got around to doing some deep cleaning in the garage and started organizing and sorting through their things.

In the process, I came across a box of my dad's belongings. Unfortunately, a rat had gotten into the garage and into that box, destroying much of it with urine. I was heartbroken and frustrated. In that box, though, I found a smaller box containing cassette tapes. The tapes were covered in dirt and grime from the rat. It was gross, but I knew I had to try to salvage them. I didn't have the mental space or energy to deal with it right then, so I set the box aside in a safe place.

Later in the summer, about six weeks later, I finally had the time and wherewithal to examine those cassettes. I put on protective gloves, brought them into the kitchen, and carefully opened them up to see if they were recoverable. To my surprise and relief, the cassettes themselves were undamaged. As I turned them over and looked at the titles, I realized they were recordings from the Sunday school class my dad had taught at First Baptist Church in Newbury Park.

I stood there in the kitchen, holding those cassettes, feeling like I had discovered an incredible treasure. The tapes were from 1981, and I wondered if they were still viable after all these years. I happened to have an old cassette player that I

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dug out, but when I tried to play a test tape, nothing happened. The player was dead. So, I hopped on Amazon and ordered a new cassette player—one that could transfer the audio to a digital format like mp3, so I could preserve and share the recordings.

When the new cassette player arrived, I tested it out with an old cassette to make sure it worked. Then, I carefully loaded one of my dad's tapes into the player, pressed play, and waited. As the sound of the mic adjusting filled the air, I heard my dad's voice. My dad's voice! It was an incredibly emotional moment. I just sat there, listening as the sound of his voice washed over me—the tone, the cadence, the familiar figures of speech. It was like being transported back in time, sitting in that room with him again.

I quickly realized I needed to record this, so I set everything up and began the process. To my delight, I was able to make recordings of about 12 of my dad's teachings from that adult Sunday school class. Sitting there, listening to him teach again, was an amazing experience. I found myself laughing at his stories, waiting to hear him mention my sisters, Becky and Susie, or my mom, or someone else we knew from that time.

But here's where it gets even more incredible. If you've been following this podcast, you know that earlier this summer, I started a series called "How to Study the Bible." Well, among the cassettes I found, one of them was from a series my dad taught called "How to Enjoy the Bible." Isn't that amazing? I'm teaching this summer on how to study and enjoy the Word of God, and here's my dad, teaching the same thing over 40 years ago.

It gets better. Among those cassettes was a series on Proverbs, messages on financial matters and how to think biblically about your finances, and a series on Psalm 119. If you've been following along with this podcast, you know that I've been teaching through Psalm 119, taking it one chunk at a time, using it as a platform to help us learn how to dwell in the Word, how to study the Bible, how to enjoy the Bible. And now, here's my dad, doing the same thing, teaching through Psalm 119, all those years ago.

I don't even know what to say. I wanted to share this exciting news with you. I'm still in the process of recording and fine-tuning these cassettes, and I'll be getting them out on a platform so I can share them with you. They won't be edited—they'll be raw recordings, complete with references to our family, current events from that time, and the wobbly sound of the cassette. They're longer formats, about 45 minutes to an hour each, but I strongly encourage you to take the time to listen.

Soon, you'll be able to sit at the feet of my dad, Dave Garrett, and be blessed as I have been. His faithfulness in teaching the Word, his early adoption of technology, and his passion for recording these classes have given us this incredible gift. I've reached out to Grace Baptist Church to see if they have any other cassettes in their archives, but for now, I'm grateful for what I have. I look forward to sharing these treasures with you soon.

Thank you for listening, for being a part of this podcast, and for sharing in this journey with me. I'll announce on my website when the recordings are ready, and I can't wait to share my dad's messages with all of you.

Listen to the next episode in "Rediscovering Dad" at JenniferGRichmond.com