

Dobson Signs Off at Focus on the Family

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✖ After more than 30 years at the helm of one of the nation's leading family organizations, psychologist James Dobson is leaving the ministry he founded this week.

Dobson will host his final *Focus on the Family* radio show Friday, when he is expected to talk about the future of Focus on the Family and Family Talk, a new ministry he is starting. Dobson's wife, Shirley, also has resigned from the ministry's leadership.

"This is a difficult experience for Shirley and me because we're awash in nostalgia," Dobson said on Thursday's broadcast. " ... We have spent three quarters of my professional life here within the confines of this ministry. It's been our life. It's been our home. But the Lord has led us. He's put His hand at my back, and it's been very clear that He's saying it's time to go, it's time to let go."

Dobson, 73, has been phasing out of leadership of the Colorado-based ministry since 2003. He resigned as chairman of the board in February 2009 but was expected to continue hosting Focus on the Family's flagship radio program, where he has been giving marriage and parenting advice as well as his views on political issues.

But in November he announced that he was stepping down as host of the show and the following month said he would begin hosting a new radio program with his son, Ryan. Titled *James Dobson on the Family*, the program is expected to discuss

marriage and parenting issues and give Dobson more freedom to discuss public policy concerns.

The *New York Times* speculated in January that Ryan Dobson, 37, may have motivated the transition. A Focus board member told the newspaper that board policy prohibited Ryan Dobson from becoming the voice of *Focus on the Family* because he has been divorced.

Dobson said Thursday that the new ministry would not compete with Focus on Family and that Focus' board voted last weekend to provide funds to help him launch Family Talk.

"I'm starting a new ministry ... but it is not in any way a matter of tension," Dobson said during the broadcast, which also included Focus on the Family President Jim Daly and board chairman Pat Caruana. "We're going in the same direction. The board expressed that partnership and that camaraderie in the decisions made last weekend, and I deeply appreciate it."

This week, *Focus on the Family* has aired emotional calls from dozens of listeners thanking Dobson for his counsel and pro-life leadership in the last 33 years.

Tom Minnery, a senior vice president at Focus on the Family, said the ministry would not depart from Dobson's vision.

"The pillars will remain the same," he said, according to Focus on the Family's CitizenLink. "Our devotion to our cause of the family, our devotion to the notion that life is sacred, to the notion that marriage is one man and one woman, those will never change."