



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Chasing Love – Part 2

**Guest(s):** Dr. Sean McDowell

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**Dr. James Dobson:** You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson, and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

**Roger Marsh:** Well, welcome back to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. I hope you had a great Valentine's Day. Whether you had someone to share it with or not, hope you found some time to remember that God loves each and every one of us just as we are each and every day. Well, today we are continuing our conversation with Dr. Sean McDowell in today's part two of his interview with our own Dr. Tim Clinton. They're discussing love and relationships and Sean's brand new book called *Chasing Love: Sex, Love and Relationships in a Confused Culture*.

And remember, you can access the entire two-part conversation by visiting our broadcast page at [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). If you are not familiar with Sean McDowell, let me tell you a little bit about him. He is a renowned Christian apologist, an international speaker, author, and the co-host of the *Think Biblically* podcast. And yes, he is in fact the son of Josh McDowell. Sean earned his Ph.D. in apologetics and worldview studies from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary back in 2014. Currently, he teaches a high school Bible class at Capistrano Valley Christian School and is also an associate professor in the Christian Apologetics program at the Talbot School of Theology at Biola University. Sean is married to Stephanie and together, they have three kids. Let's join Sean McDowell and our own Dr. Tim Clinton right now as they continue their conversation here on Family Talk.

**Dr. Tim Clinton:** Sean, welcome back, whether a delightful conversation yesterday. Again, the book *Chasing Love: Sex, Love, and Relationships In a Confused Culture*. I'm telling you what, it's got a lot of substance in there, some stuff that people are afraid to talk about, but Sean, we've got to talk through these issues because at the end of the day, people are craving love. Years ago, Sean, I heard a statement and I tried to reflect on it, what did it really mean? And it was the man knocking on the door of the harlot is really looking for God. And I thought, "That means he's on a journey and what he'll do is he'll do anything to reach to find what it means to love and be loved, won't he?" Sean, that's the cry of the soul.

Dr. Sean McDowell: I think it is. I think the deepest desire of the human heart is for intimacy, not for sex. Now, God designs sex as one way of experiencing intimacy, not the only way, but let's face it, you can have sex with somebody without being intimate and you can be intimate with somebody without having sex. That's some of the cultural confusion that has taken place. But I do find it fascinating, even in the way our culture often portrays and talks about sex, it's like they understand there's this spiritual component behind it, whether you're walking through a mall and having to turn and there's some underwear store and they make the model with wings like an angel.

I remember just seeing that one time and pausing like why are you adding an angel? Is there a spiritual component that people are adding to this? Whether they do it intentionally or not, I think we understand there's something transcendent about sex. It draws us out of ourselves and deep inside of, it's not just about a physical feeling, it's yearning to be held and to be loved and to be cared for, which really is a deeper eternal yearning we have I think with God.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Sean, your book, *Chasing Love*, came out I think in 2020, right around when the pandemic hit. When you're out on the front lines, and by the way, you're in front of college kids, high school kids, young adults everywhere. What are you hearing from them when you open up the mic, if you will, and they just start pouring out their hearts and what's happening inside their own journeys?

Dr. Sean McDowell: Well, one thing I hear is just an appreciation that I'm willing to talk about this topic. There's a sense of relief and gratitude that I'm just willing to go there and say, "Hey, our Christian faith applies to all these issues. You're not going to embarrass me. These are good topics. Let's go to God's words." So I think there's a sense of relief, but I think there's also a sense of empowerment. This is a generation that doesn't know how to think about what's the purpose of the body, what's the purpose of sex?

How do I think about topics like pornography that are everywhere? How do I engage this LGBTQ conversation? And so when we don't talk about it, we're sending the message whether we want to or not, that we can just compartmentalize our faith on this issue. And when we do that, that void is going to get filled by the ideas of the world. That's why Paul says in Romans 12:2, "Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind." So in general, this generation is thankful, but they also feel empowered when we're willing to talk about the authority issues.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Everybody talks about hooking up in this generation, you know that, Sean. And casual sex, it's rampant. Sean, in the midst of this, you do a piece in the book on honoring God with your body and your soul. And in it, I know you referenced a good friend of Dr. Dobson's, I've been around him a little bit, Joe McElhanney, he wrote a book called *Hooked*, and in it he talked about this imprinting that takes place when you have sex with someone. And it's pretty stunning research. Sean, what are we missing when we try to understand this intimacy piece with God?

Dr. Sean McDowell: So part of the lie of a hookup is that I can give somebody my body, but then it's not going to affect my soul. I just go be sexually active somebody and then move on with my life. But the problem is, as Dr. McElhaney showed, those physical experiences, especially sexuality, imprint on the brain, and God has put certain chemicals inside of us, things like oxytocin and vasopressin, that when we're sexually active with somebody, they're released and they've actually been called things like the bonding hormone that are meant to bond us together, in body and in soul. So that's why somebody who's sexually active has bought the lie that they can just hook up and move on, but their body and their mind is crying out for more. They feel lonely. They're yearning for what you said earlier, Tim, the sense of being loved.

I'll often say to students, I'll say, "Okay, is it possible to make a case that sex outside of marriage is wrong without using the Bible?" And they'll look at me like, "No, you got to use the Bible." And I'll say, "Here's my case. Sex outside of marriage is wrong because you shouldn't lie." And then they'll look at me like I'm crazy. And here's my point. We communicate with our words, but we also communicate with our bodies. The middle finger means something, a slap means something. A kiss means something. A hug means something. So let's ask the question, what does sex communicate? Well, it communicates trust. It communicates vulnerability. It communicates intimacy. It communicates love. And I would argue because a child results from sex, it also communicates permanence. So then I'll ask students, I'll say, "If you're sexually active as somebody, but you're not in a relationship that matches what your body is saying, you are lying with your body." And I wish you could see their eyes when I see this.

And by the way, there was a movie in the early 2000s with Tom Cruise called *Vanilla Sky*, and he has some affair with a character and then leaves and goes, has relationship with another character, and the first woman starts stalking him and she says something to the effect, I don't have the quote right in front of me, something to the effect of, "Don't you know that when you sleep with somebody, your body makes a promise, even if you don't." Wow. When I heard that, I thought, "Holy cow." The lie of our culture, like you said, Tim, is just do whatever you want with your body. But what we do with our body means something. We are to honor God with our bodies. We're to love other people with our bodies and love them with our souls.

Dr. Tim Clinton: In this journey, throughout your book, *Chasing Love*, you present this content in a way, Sean, that is not a turnoff. It's intriguing to begin to just piece things together logically and to see the flow here. And it's so important. This again is a gift to parents because parents often...they want to know what to say when they don't know what to say. They need something that helps glue this thing together, because they're getting challenged at every turn over these issues. Oh, you're just prudish, you're just whatever. Sexual intercourse, a lot of people think that's all that's necessary to maintain purity. Meaning if you don't go all the way, that's how you keep your purity. You spend some time, Sean, talking about Paul saying, "Hey, listen, sexual immorality with our bodies, we need to

keep ourselves from that." But you also argue that your mind is critical here. And take us down that road because this is a real struggle, especially for a lot of Christian kids.

Dr. Sean McDowell: I'm thankful for those who've come before me and tried to help the church and young people think about purity. But as we look back, there's some things that are a, quote unquote, part of purity culture we might want to frame differently. And one of them is we often told kids just don't have sex, as if that meant all of a sudden you are being pure. So there were generation of kids who looked at pornography, maybe had things like oral sex and said, "Well, I'm a virgin, I'm pure." And I thought, "Wait a minute, we are completely missing the boat here." Purity involves body and it involves soul. And a sense being pure is living according to God's design for relationships in body and in soul. So I want to take a step back in this book, and you're right, I'm not preaching at kids. I don't answer all the questions. In some ways, I'm trying to ask questions, and this book is meant to be read by parents with their kids, grandparents, with their kids, teachers in a classroom, in a youth group.

It's meant to create conversation. So when young people say again, "How far is too far? What does it mean to be pure?" I say, "Let's reframe the question." Rather than saying, "How far could I go up to the edge without falling off," which I get it as a young person, I get it. I want to say, what if we ask a question? "What does it mean to love my date? What does it mean to care for my date in terms of their beliefs and their feelings and their character and their body?" If we reframe the question that way, I think we find very, very different answers. So we've got to do more than say, "Just don't have sex." We got to be pure in body. We got to be pure in mind and of course, communicate to kids in our sexualized culture when they fall short, there's forgiveness, there's restoration, there's healing. Let's learn from it and move on.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. You're listening to Family Talk, a division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host. Our special guest, Dr. Sean McDowell, professor at Talbot School of Theology at Biola University, travels worldwide speaking at camps, churches, schools and conferences. Sean is also co-host of the Think Biblically podcast. Sean, tell us a little bit about the podcast and what you guys are trying to do through that.

Dr. Sean McDowell: Oh, thanks for asking. Five years ago, my co-host, Scott Ray, who's one of the leading Christian ethicists in the world at Talbot, said, "Hey, let's do a podcast." Didn't know what we were doing. We just started getting guests and figuring out as we went. And of course you learn and you grow. Now looking back after five years, we're not reaching people like Family Talk. You guys have been nailing it forever, but I think got a million downloads recently, and we basically talk about issues of faith and culture. So we'll talk about issues of sexuality.

How do we think biblically about it? We'll talk about issues of history. We'll talk about issues of ethics. The idea is, how do we think biblically about some of the most pressing issues of our day? And it's 25, 30 minutes, the average commute,

so we just jump in. We don't waste time and banter. We get right to the subject, and I've really found there's a big audience of people who are just hungry for biblical wisdom on some issues that they just maybe don't really know how to process, whether it's immigration, gun control, climate change. Those are all the topics we weigh into.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Sean, that brings us back to our conversation around *Chasing Love*. Again, you spend some meaningful time on helping people understand the purpose of marriage, and again, taking on the issue of singleness. Sean, lead them together for a moment, but speak specifically to those who are out there, again, tough maybe season of life they're in. They're trying to figure out how to deal with their longings. They're confused about dating and relationships. Maybe they've come through some bad relationship stuff.

Dr. Sean McDowell: I would say, first off, you're not alone if you feel that way. I'm sure you get these messages, Tim, all the time, but I get emails from people, single that are struggling, people that are married, that are struggling, people that are divorced. And just my heart goes out to them. And sometimes they just think they're the only one. Well, they're not. So if you're listening to this and this is you, you're not the only one. Part of my encouragement would be is just to open up to some people around you at your church, maybe at work if they're trusted. And just having others love on you and care for you is such a good way to heal and grow through this. If you try to do it alone, you're just going to devastate yourself. And I know that from personal experience. When I try to do something alone and carry my own burdens, it's just painful.

It doesn't end well. The Bible talks about we need to encourage one another. We need to confess our sins to one another, bear one another's burdens. Yes, we need Jesus, but Jesus made us to need and want and be in relationship with others. That's where healing is going to take place. Third, I found for many people just looking at understanding biblically what singleness is for, is very freeing. And so we often talk about how marriage will in some ways illustrate God's character. So God is triune character. He's one God, three persons. We see in marriage, one marriage, two persons, but we don't always talk about how singleness also foreshadows heaven.

Jesus makes it clear that marriage is just for this life. And the Old Testament is all about having kids, and God's covenant was passed on through the seed, so to speak. When he gets the New Testament, Jesus redraws those lines. Who is my mother and my brother and my sister? And He points to His followers, namely the church as being the family of God. Singles in this life are giving us a foreshadow of when we get to Heaven and we have our relationships with others in the church and with God. I know it's hard to see that right here, but that is one of the beauty of singleness, saying, "Our priority is the body of Christ above all."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Sean, in our culture, we make fun of people who are 40 year old virgins, et cetera. You know that. But I loved what you talked about in the book as the gift

of singleness. We need to embrace this. We need to understand this. Sean, if we're going to go forward in that way, embracing the Lord and for all of us to understand that he is the only one who can meet the deepest longings of our heart. That's the most critical piece that we've got to get right. And by the way, when we have that right, is a gift to our relationships, our marriages too.

Dr. Sean McDowell: Yeah, I think that's right. I think we need to pay attention to the language that we use within the church. Oftentimes when somebody's 30 or 40, there's constant jokes. Well, when are you going to get married? And people who are single have told me they feel treated a different way, and I get it. Like Paul talks about in first Corinthians seven, "There's a gift of singleness and there's a gift of marriage." In fact, he seems to pretty clearly, strongly say that singleness is favorable. I don't hear that preached a lot in evangelical churches. So our theology, our preaching, even our classes sometimes, we just do stuff only for married couples, but don't find ways to incorporate and utilize and celebrate the beauty of singleness. It really does a disservice to singles, and I don't think it's balanced biblically either.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Sean, we're fighting time, but I want to highlight just a couple of major topics that you take on toward the end of the book. Laying the foundation that you did in the book, it makes sense now. It's only intuitive that we can address issues like pornography. And Sean, let's camp there just for a second. We know that major consumer of internet pornography are boys, 12 to 17 years of age. Sean, what they see up in their phones, grown men can't handle. And a lot of people are saying when COVID kicked in, we went to a whole new place. Porn Hub exploded, the porn endemic kicked in place and Sean, some are saying there's a coming tsunami of young men, for example, who are going to really struggle and what it means to love and be loved, how to have intimacy in a relationship. Sean, what are your thoughts on porn and what's it doing to the Christian family, the home?

Dr. Sean McDowell: I think the tsunami is already here, Tim. I really do. And we see it in how it affects the brain, how it affects relationships, the sexual behavior of this generation. It even affects the way they think about God. This is truly a pornified generation. This generation of high school and college age students have been raised with access to anything, anytime, anywhere, and I don't think most parents have a clue what their kids are seeing.

Dr. Tim Clinton: No.

Dr. Sean McDowell: So it's one of the biggest issues confronting the church, and I think it's all hands on deck. So with our kids, we've got to start early. We've got to talk about God's goodness in marriage and design and sexuality and actually give them tools to navigate this. The question is not if a kid is going to be exposed, it's, are we going to teach them ahead of time, give them a biblical worldview and teach them how to respond when it comes. But the tsunami is here.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And along with that culture, just seems to be lost in this homosexuality issue, LGBTQ community challenges, even the way it's creeping into the church. I'm thinking about the issue around same sex marriage. I know you talk about natural marriage and same sex marriage. You take on the whole issue of transgender ideology and more, gender dysphoria. And Sean, in the midst of it, what you do is you take us back to this foundational understanding of what God is trying to do, in and through us, and then make logical arguments. I love the natural marriage versus same sex marriage piece when you talked about marital equality is what everybody's crying for. But what about equality for the children when it comes to a mom and dad and more. Sean, these are topics that people tiptoe through.

They are afraid to take it on. It's like where they say angels fear to tread, but you present it with love and logic, and I love the compassion that pours out of you as you approach these subjects and as we approach people, because we encounter them every day. Close us up, button us up on why these issues become critical and why we need to have a reason for understanding the hope and the love and the relationship that lies deep within us.

Dr. Sean McDowell: Tim, you gave the example of somebody who knocks in the door of a brothel is looking for God. I think that's true in all of our relationships, whether it's pornography, whether it's different sexual identities or relationships that do not line up with scripture. So I want to be compassionate and gracious towards people, because I know that's what human beings are made for and what they're seeking after. So is there a way to stay faithful to what the Bible says, because that's what brings real freedom in relationship.

Is there a way to stay faithful to that and to equip our young people to stand strong on a culture that says that view is bigoted, that view is hateful, that view is intolerant? I think there is, and it's by going back to what Jesus taught about sexuality, because he is our designer and he is the incarnation of love. So basically, this book is meant to be a tool to help parents equip and talk with young people about these topics that you said, where angels don't tread. Well, we've got to go there. If we don't, ideas in our culture are going to step in and be a substitute or a counterfeit, as the way you framed it. So we can do this, if we build a relationship with our kids and then engage them in spiritual conversation.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yes, it's about speaking the truth in love. I know everyone talks about I want to love everybody, but truth in love is loving. That's what it's all about. "I have no greater joy than to know my children," John said, "Walk in the truth." Sean, if people want to learn more about you and what you're doing, where you're speaking, what resources you have, where can they go?

Dr. Sean McDowell: Probably the Basic Hub is my website, just seanmcdowell.org, but I'm on Twitter, I'm on Instagram. I even have a TikTok account where I post videos and apologetics and worldview, have a YouTube channel where I do a lot of these topics of culture and apologetics. So a lot of social media platforms are out

there, but probably the basic hub that connects them would be my website, seanmcdowell.org.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We've been talking about *Chasing Love: Sex, Love, and Relationships in a Confused Culture* with our special guest, Dr. Sean McDowell. You'll remember again, his daddy, Josh and his mom Dottie, and what they've meant to the ministry and what they've meant to Christianity through the years. Sean, again, what a delight. On behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, the entire team here at Family Talk, we're going to pray that God will continue to strengthen and encourage your heart to be bold for such a time as this. Thank you for joining us.

Dr. Sean McDowell: Thank you.

Roger Marsh: Well, I hope today's conversation was encouraging to you. Whether you are single or in a relationship, each has their own biblical beauty, by the way. And that was Dr. Sean McDowell and his discussion about love from his book called *Chasing Love*. Now, to find out more about Sean or to go back and listen to parts one or two of this conversation, just visit [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). Also, Dr. Dobson has an additional resource for you to build a stronger marriage and family. It's called "Building a Family Legacy," an eight DVD video series.

This compilation was created for you by Dr. James Dobson himself, and for a suggested donation of \$50, you can have this series sent directly to your home. Just visit our website at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). That's [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org), or give us a call at 877-732-6825. No matter where you are, we love hearing from you, and I encourage you to call our customer care team as well. They're here for you 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year to suggest free resources, and most importantly, to pray with and for you. If you need a listening ear, just call 877-732-6825 right now. I'm Roger Marsh, and from all of us here at Family Talk, thank you for joining us for today's program. Hope you'll join us again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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