



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Fractured Faith: Finding Your Way Back to God

**Guest(s):** Lina Abujamra

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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:** I'm Roger Marsh and you are listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Today, we have a very tender, vulnerable conversation to share with you. Recently, our own Dr. Tim Clinton, who is president of the American Association of Christian Counselors as well as our co-host here at Family Talk interviewed Dr. Lina Abujamra about her brand new book called *Fractured Faith*. Lina is a pediatric emergency room doctor. She's a Bible teacher and founder of Living With Power Ministries. She is the author of several books, including *Thrive*, *Resolved*, and as mentioned before her most recent title, *Fractured Faith*.

Lina ministers to single Christians through her Moody Radio program called *Today's Single Christian*. On today's Family Talk program, Dr. Lina Abujamra will share about a difficult, confusing and painful time in her life, a time when she became disillusioned with her home church, lost friendships and even doubted God's love for her. It's a very personal conversation, but one that we think many people will be able to relate to. Here now is Dr. Tim Clinton to introduce Lina's new book on today's edition of Family Talk.

**Dr. Tim Clinton:** Welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton. I'm your co-host for today's program. I also serve as president of the American Association of Christian Counselors. I'm a licensed professional counselor and a licensed marriage and family therapist. I'm also honored to serve as the resident authority on Mental Health and Relationships here at JDFI. Thank you for joining us on Family Talk today. Have you been hearing about deconstruction and deconstructing your faith lately? Maybe you've heard the buzzword exvangelical. It seems like every couple of months, a famous high profile Christian is turning his or her back on their faith or maybe you've been struggling with your own doubts and disappointments. You're wondering, where is God? He said He loves me, that He has good things in store for me, but all I can see is pain and broken dreams.

Well, if that's you, I hope you'll listen closely to the conversation I'm about to have with our guest, Dr. Lina Abujamra. Lina is a pediatric emergency room

doctor now practicing telemedicine and founder of Living With Power Ministries. Her vision is to bring hope to the world by connecting biblical answers to everyday life. She's a popular Bible teacher, podcaster, author and conference speaker. Lina is also engaged in providing medical care to Syrian refugees in disaster areas in the Middle East. In Lina's most recent book, *Fractured Faith: Finding Your Way Back To God In An Age Of Deconstruction*, she tells her own story of deconstructing faith and eventually coming to know the God who was there more intimately than ever before. And that's the topic on our broadcast today. Lina, such a delight to have you. Thank you for joining me here on Family Talk.

Lina Abujamra: It is so good to be here. Man, I grew up listening to James Dobson and I feel like I'm reliving my childhood and teen years and just awesome, awesome stuff that has come out of this ministry. So thank you for having me.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lina, we all know it's been a pretty tough season the last couple of years and we're going to talk today about a pretty tough subject deconstruction. I saw where it's a systematic pulling apart of your belief system that you were raised up in. Lina, tell us a little bit about how this became a centerpiece of your own life and why you wrote *Fractured Faith*.

Lina Abujamra: Yeah, I grew up in Lebanon in a very sound semi Christian home, but heavily influenced by my mother's faith. My dad had not turned to Christ, but in a culture where we really had the mom influenced the home, like the dad brought the money and the mom took care of the kids. And so I grew up with a very innocent belief in Jesus and as we moved to the United States, when I was a teenager, because of the war in Lebanon, integrated easily again into the church in the United States and was one of those trouble free teenagers going into college, decided to be a doctor, sort of lived my life and very early on decided to, felt a calling in my life to follow the Lord as a doctor, I thought I'd be a missionary doctor.

And so really, I felt like throughout my life, I've had a yieldedness to God and a sense of a strong faith in what God had for me. And so, what happened in the early 2000s, around 2013, sort of came as a big surprise. So, the 10 years leading up to 2013, I was practicing pediatric emergency medicine, but at the beginning of my career, God had really led me to feel like He had called me to teach the Bible. So I sort of had simultaneous bivocational journeys where I was teaching the Bible and my dream was to be integrated in a local church and I found a church that I absolutely adored in the Chicago area and it was flourishing and bustling and awesome. And everything was so good until maybe 2010 and those years between 2010 to 2013, everything unraveled in that church, which now is a well-known story that's been written about and documented.

But in it, I eventually found that it was the wise and I felt spirit led decision to leave. It was prayerful. There was not a necessarily a personal issue as much as there was a structure that I could see was not correct. And so I think because I had such noble and what I felt was, again, God led reasons for leaving. I assume

God would show Himself mighty on my behalf that he would prove to those who didn't see clearly yet that I was, I was right and not just me, but the many who had seen those holes in the structure and of course things go from bad to worse in those sorts of stories. And sadly, when I left everything that I thought would happen did not. I was in many ways abandoned by my church family, which had, you can imagine being a single woman who had dedicated her life to teaching the Bible.

This was more than just my church, this was my life. It was really an unmooring of so much of what I had come to identify as my Christian life. And more to that was the fact that I really looked up to the pastor who was unraveling. And so I felt very, very betrayed by the leadership, but also by my friends who had remained in the church and eventually really the big cataclysmic event was when I really sensed and felt at that season in my life that God wasn't coming through for me. So it moved quickly from this question of, people can disappoint you, but God, why aren't you doing anything? And so that took a few years to unfold. It was between 2013 and maybe 2016 or 2017 that I really started to understand how much I had started to question what I had believed about the local church, about calling, about life, about God and how much I had isolated my heart from the Lord.

I think it was so subtle. I was still in ministry. I was still speaking at churches. And I think now we didn't have language back in those years of deconstruction, as we do now. Nowadays, we see people who deconstruct and automatically think that means they've left of faith. They're no longer evangelical. And I actually don't think at all that's true. I think that process that we talk about is really a process that shakes you to the core and makes you feel untethered. And I think the key now, when you find yourself in that place is how will you land? And I think the assumption that every person who's deconstructing will land away from faith is a false assumption. I think many people in the church find themselves in a place I was in for those years. Looking like we believe, acting the part, showing up the small group, even praying and teaching the Bible, but there's a separation that is at the core of our soul, in our trust of the goodness of God and His ways.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

You know, Lina, I'm going to be careful here because I think the most dangerous form of deconstruction is that piece where it seems like every couple of months, we're hearing some Christian leader who is "leaving the faith", doesn't believe in God anymore, raised in a Christian home, preaching for years, et cetera and then now like atheist or agnostic or spiritual, but they don't have any kind religious anchor so to speak. We want to be careful that we don't spin into that. What you're talking about are maybe like that St. John of the Cross, dark night of the soul experience. It's like Dr. Dobson, a few years ago wrote a book, *When God Doesn't Make Sense*. All of us come to a place where we journey with God, my good friend, Gary Habermas, Lina would talk about doubt and say that when you struggle. And I think I saw recently where like 43 or 44% of people will go through a major faith transition in life.

We want to be very careful here for a moment because in this crazy world that we're living in, there are assaults on the faith, et cetera, you know that. People are coming out and attacking faith leaders and more. I'm not against "digging out stuff" that needs to be rooted out. God likes to expose the darkness. But at the end of the day, we're on a journey here and Lina, your book *Fractured Faith*, you're trying to make some sense out of this journey, right?

Lina Abujamra:

Yeah. I think we've gotten caught in the last year or year and a half in the semantics of what is happening. And I feel like one of the themes that is always present in however you define deconstruction because I really think it becomes a play on words, but it's not a word problem. I really think it becomes a play on words. It's not a word problem. It's a heart problem. And I think yes, to your point, I absolutely think what I went through was a deep dark night of the soul. By the way, very similar to what I suspect happened in a brief amount of time to Peter, when he, by the way, predicted by Jesus, that he would deny the Lord and that God would then change him, that he would strengthen the brothers and that segment of Scripture was very encouraging to me. In fact, Peter would then go out and give up so to speak into the boat, try to fish, no fish comes in and then radically transformed back into this deeper sounder, more solid faith in the person of the resurrected Jesus Christ.

So, there is something that happens, of course, with Peter. It was just a few days in length, but for us here in this era that can extend over months. And I think the noise of the culture, the noise of those who have dropped it and says, I no longer believe. Whether they were Christians before or not, we don't know. God knows these things. The noise of social media is what has, I think, created an immense shadow over the conversation so that a person who's in the church who's rooted in Christ, who's struggling with this dark night of the soul, be it because of personal pain, maybe personal abuses, maybe leadership that failed them, maybe a church that has disappointed them. The list is long of how we hurt, but enough that we stop and go, is this God trustworthy? And really at the heart of it is discretion of like, "why God, why would you allow this to happen to me?" And so there's this global suffering that humans in generally think why bad things happen.

I grew up in Lebanon. I go and serve the Syrian refugees now. And so there's a sense of like wondering why do bad things happen there? But when they happen here, in the circle of my life and my heart, I think that's where a crisis unfolds.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

Lina, I remember hanging sheetrock with a guy one day and I can hear his words as plain as day, "I don't believe in God anymore Tim, not doing it." And I just listened for a little while. And then what came out was he lost his little girl. She died and it was like, a good God doesn't do that. God doesn't do that kind of thing. And Lina, he was on a journey.

Lina Abujamra:

Yeah. And I think at the heart of every crisis is a refusal to trust in the goodness of God, which I believe is ultimately what our faith is, isn't it? That's what

Christianity is. It's not an agenda to get to heaven. It is genuinely believing that this God is good no matter what happens in our life. Well, how do we attest to that if we haven't walked through the furnace of fire and tasted and seen the goodness of God?

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lina, when that question why comes up or that angst is in our soul, I'm sitting here thinking about maybe some events or disappointments, maybe some questions that come up and maybe it's curiosity or doubt or whatever. But we get to a place where we begin to wrestle with God. How did you really view God in those moments or what was happening in your heart and in your mind, what was swirling inside of you about God?

Lina Abujamra: I think the hardest thing for me has been in that season in particular, and I think that's probably the thing that has changed the most is I as a Bible teacher, I mean, as again, I was teaching the Bible in those seasons. I never stopped believing that God could be good to you. So I could teach with confidence God's goodness to others. What really suffered was I just stopped trusting. So I stopped praying because I didn't believe that God really cared about me. Yeah, He dies for us and He saves us. But I just felt like for the things that mattered the most in my life, He didn't show up in the way that I thought He would. I think this was really the most shocking thing that was the darkness over my life. And so I would read the Bible because I grew up with this, I've had enough conviction to still go to church plus I had a six year old nephew at the time, four or five, six now he's eight.

So, it must have been about in those early ages, early enough, where he would call me and say, are you coming to church with us? And probably part of my continuing church had more to do with this nephew that God used in my life who was nothing but a toddler, but this accountability that was sort of still there where I wouldn't want to shame him and we had enough conviction to show up, to read my Bible. Because I had to prepare Bible study and I didn't, I wanted God's blessing, but I just felt like numb. I think numb is probably the most common thing that I reverted to because it was easier to feel numb than to feel pain. And I think the other thing that has surprised me in writing is the amount of shame I felt that I couldn't shake myself out of it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lina, during times of barrenness or confusion, people often quote verses trying to speak to their own heart or other people speak them at us like Romans 8:28 "and we know that all things work together for good" or my wife Julie loves Jeremiah 29:11, "For I know the plans I have for you says the Lord" and Lina you mentioned the word shame because we probably have taught those, we've shared those ourself and we're struggling to believe them and it's like, God, if you're really there for me, would you do something? Would you show me, would you give me a sign, anything. And maybe there's just no answer.

Lina Abujamra: Well, I think it's counterintuitive. I think here's what I've found. And it's funny because you talk about Bible passage. I tell you what Bible passage and how it all sort of ended up playing out in my life because I think it wasn't what I

expected because I think we've been taught particularly. Well in all Christianity, I see it in the East too and when I go back to the Middle East, but in the West in particular, we are a people who want breakthrough and signs and wonders and parting of the red seas. While all those are good, I don't think that's the most common way God speaks. I think the most powerful and common way is what we read about in the story of Elijah. The still whisper of God, which I think there's so much noise in our minds and souls in 2022 and the years leading up to this, I really think despite being locked into our homes in 2020, you would think there would be more quiet, but really our souls have been noisy.

And so, one of the things that was on my journey to get back to a place where I could hear the Lord was just to unclutter the noise in my soul. And I think that is where the challenge of American Christianity lies because we've got this phone with us all the time with this constant barrage of noise and if you only expose yourself to that, no wonder people are deconstructing. Because they're hearing the teaching of what people who no longer believe in God are pouring into their minds. And so it's like poison. It's like drinking poison. And so, if you don't get yourself in the Word of God, you won't hear the whisper of the Lord. And but you don't want to be in the Word because you've convinced yourself that you haven't found the answers there.

And so how do you finally open it and get there? And so we are also a culture that craves 1, 2, 3 Christianity. We want the list, give me the points that I need to accomplish in order to get there. This is the most common thing people tell me, how did you get back to a place of such deep faith? And they want one, two and three, even five is okay because I'm willing to do the work, now God show yourself to me, but it's not like that. It's a process of becoming on the lowest of lows, right? You get so broken. There is such power and brokenness in a Christian life. I mean that is why Elijah had to hit the rock bottom when he gets in a cave 40 years of eating nothing but the little pieces of cake that God leaves and all of that. We see it all the time in scripture, this utter defeat and brokenness, which was finally where we can lift our heads and go, I have no other way.

And so, one day I remember I was in here. I'm talking to you from my home. And I had come back on a cold day, but then I had finally, someone had told me, you might want to see a therapist. And honestly, I believe in therapy, I'm a doctor. I send people to therapist. I just never thought I needed it. And even in saying that I would need it, it felt like I was admitting weakness and shame. I mean, I'm a doctor, I've got it together. And so I finally said, no, I might need help. And particularly I think it's necessary for someone who might be listening, who has separated from the church where now you no longer have a circle of people that can pour truth into you.

So, in that setting, the therapist was really a very good relationship for me to speak honestly, authentically and truthfully about the Lord. And so I had come back from a session. This was about maybe five to 10 sessions in, so it was early enough on. And I remember feeling so frustrated with the session that day,

because I felt like even the therapist couldn't understand me fully. I just felt like she wasn't totally getting it. So I felt like, come on Lord, even how, and so I felt like beyond help. So I came home, it was a dreary Chicago day and I sat down on the couch and it was like, I really felt like the heavens were mocking me because I look, I just was spent and I felt feeling this sob wanting to come out of my heart, but just feeling stifled in it.

And I remember looking on this side table that I have and the word of God laid there and I'm telling you, Tim, I just felt like a voice in me was like, what really? This is where we're at, but I had no other, I was solo and I remember just opening it randomly. And the Psalm opened and I don't know why it opened there. I'm a truthfully dedicated Bible teacher. I believe in reading systematically through Scripture. I mean I still believe those things, but I also believe sometimes God does appear in those moments where you just open and go, God, I need something. And I remember starting to read Psalm 22 and the things that I to admit felt so shameful. I was reading them in Scripture, which I've read a million times before, but it felt like I was seen in a fresh way, in a personal way and I remember breaking and I just started crying. I was like, oh my goodness. And it was a turning point for me.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lina, for those who are listening right now who have turned this one up and they're wrestling with God, maybe tears in their own eyes. And they're saying, God, I want that breakthrough. I want to know you that way. These longings that are deep down in my heart. God, I'm crying out. I want to give them to you. I'm struggling giving them to you. But God, I want to do that. I want to go there. Lina, can you close us out by just talking straight to him or her right now?

Lina Abujamra: Yeah. I urge you to keep showing up. I mean, one of the things that actually ended up being so healing, so first came that epiphany in the Word of God, but really it was so much more. I talked about my pastor, Karl Clauson, who actually I think is friends with family life and I never stopped going to church. I kept showing up. It was a struggle for years and little by little God used his own people. The very people that initially I felt like had betrayed me. There was a couple of women and one woman in particular Jeanne in this small group that I swore I'd never go back to small group. I did not trust people. But little by little God brought these unlikely people that I remember sitting in a small group woman, how did I even end up here again?

But it was because I liked the pastor and he didn't pressure me. He just, they loved on me. And so I showed up to the small group and unbeknownst to me, I would meet a woman who was the small group leader assigned at the last second. And she just did just little steps of love. And all I did was show up. I had a wall so big around my heart. It's a miracle anyone could talk to me. And so I would urge whoever is listening right now, just take the next step. Just keep showing up. I think our mistake is that we shut up that voices of truth when we're walking through a dark tunnel, but we don't stop listening to the voices of darkness that come through us through people who have landed in a place that I believe is full of lies and pain. And I really would urge if you're listening, first of

all, get the book, because I think you'll find a companion in you and you'll find a friend in your misery.

I mean, I understand what you're going through, but you also, I believe, find hope and so just keep showing up and you'll be surprised how God will change the story. To this day, Tim, I have friends that God has integrated in my life and I am an introvert at heart. I'm not a big friend person. I turned 50 this year. I'm single. Every excuse not to hang out with people and yet I've been astounded at how God has surprised me with unlikely friendships with Christians who have ended up being the very people that have restored the trust in my heart for other Christians.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lina, I wanted to ask you in closing, what you believe in and how you view God now?

Lina Abujamra: I have a, it's funny because my challenges have persisted. I mean, you have challenge that we do ministry and we come up with challenges all the time. Nothing has changed. I'm still single. I still have, the issues that come up, I have a ministry that's growing and medicine, all the things that you can imagine. I have an inner peace that God is for me. I mean, this is the thing that I wake up and I no longer think "God are you for me?" It's a given. I have a steady sense that God has my back. I started by saying there is a loss of that. If you believe that God is for you and that God utterly is good even if none of your, the problems keep coming. But if you have the soundness that God, this God is good and good to you, to me personally, not just to me but everybody else in the church, that's what has become unshaken.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lina, I heard you say that you're single. Interesting, you have a commentary on Moody Network. Is that right?

Lina Abujamra: Yeah, it's called *Today's Single Christian*.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And if people wanted to learn more, how do they get up on the network?

Lina Abujamra: Yeah. Best thing to do is go to the Moody Radio Network and put in *Today's Single Christian* in the search, so just Moody Radio and then Today's Single Christian. We run in, I think 180 stations throughout the United States and it's a very practical, fun minute where I talk about faith and life from a single's perspective.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lina, if people want to know or learn more about you and your work and your speaking ministry and more, where would they go?

Lina Abujamra: [Livingwithpower.org](http://Livingwithpower.org).

Dr. Tim Clinton: Our special guest today has been Lina Abujamra, her most recent book, *Fractured Faith: Finding Your Way Back To God In An Age Of Deconstruction*.



What a fascinating story. And I love the raw. I love the real. I love the love for God that flows out of you, Lina. It's been such a delight to have you. On behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, the team at Family Talk, we appreciate the good work God's doing in and through you. And we pray that God will continue to do that work for His glory. Thank you for joining us.

Lina Abujamra: Thank you for having me. I'm so grateful.

Roger Marsh: An encouraging, vulnerable and heartfelt conversation between Dr. Tim Clinton and our guest on today's Family Talk program, Dr. Lina Abujamra. Now pain and hardship are a part of life. There's no denying that, but God uses suffering in a Christian's life to draw us closer to Him, even though it's still very difficult. If you've been experiencing a dark night of the soul, as Dr. Clinton explained it, I'd like to suggest a couple of resources that might be of an encouragement to you. The first is Dr. Dobson's book called *When God Doesn't Make Sense*. Countless people have found comfort and rest in reading this book. And secondly, Dr. Lina Abujamra's new book called *Fractured Faith* is a must read as well.

Now you can find out how to get copies of both or either of these volumes by visiting our website at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) and selecting the tab marked broadcasts. That's [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) and click on the broadcasts tab, or call our ministry resource team at (877) 732-6825. Well that's all the time we have for today here on Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. And from all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we hope that you have been reminded of God's mercy and love when you listen to this program today and may God continue to richly bless you and your family.

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