



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** The Case for Grace – Part 2

**Guest(s):** Lee Strobel

**Air Date:** April 4, 2024

[Listen to the broadcast](#)

Lee Strobel: Grace is the unmerited and undeserved favor of God in our lives. It is his forgiveness, his gift of forgiveness and eternal life that he offers us, not because we deserve it, not because we've earned it, but because he loves us, and so much that Jesus Christ is His only son, goes to the cross, dies as our substitute to pay for all of our sins and then offers forgiveness and eternal life is a free gift of Grace Race.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. You've just heard a profound and concrete definition of what God's grace truly means from our guest today here on the broadcast, Lee Strobel. Lee is a popular author and respected Christian apologist. And as you heard on yesterday's program, he spent the first part of his life as an atheist. It wasn't until much later in his adult years when his wife Leslie became a Christian that he used his journalistic abilities to analyze Christianity and eventually discover the truth of the overwhelming evidence of God's existence.

Today, Lee Strobel and Dr. Dobson will conclude their discussion on the concept of grace as outlined in Lee's book entitled *The Case for Grace*. Lee will be telling us about how God reached him in different ways throughout his life and by what means God's grace has healed Lee from a terrible wrong he orchestrated in his own past. As God told the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 verse 9, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. And now let's join Dr. James Dobson and his guest, Lee Strobel, for this classic edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Lee, you've been my guest many times through the years on radio, and I've loved every time that I've had a chance to talk to you because you-

Lee Strobel: Well, thank you. I've loved it too.

Dr. James Dobson: ... you really do have a grasp of who Jesus is and what he can do in a life. And I tell you what my hope is for today. There are people listening to us right now who have heard the name of Christ but have never accepted Him. There are others today who've never really heard Him at least not understood who He is, and maybe you will reach out to some of those people today.

Lee Strobel: Absolutely. It'd be my pleasure to do that.

Dr. James Dobson: You have written a book called *The Case for Grace: A Journalist Explores the Evidence of Transformed Lives*. You are of course a New York Times Bestselling Author, and I'm really anxious to talk to you about this book now. It is filled with stories about people who were given grace, which is unmerited favor.

Lee Strobel: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: It is receiving what you had no right to.

Lee Strobel: That's right. Free gift.

Dr. James Dobson: And it comes because Christ loves you as an individual. Knows you by name, knew you before the foundations of the earth and is calling you and beckoning you. And that's who you're addressing this book too, isn't it?

Lee Strobel: It is. I really am an addict for stories of how God transforms lives. The Bible says that when we receive Christ, this free gift of forgiveness and eternal life that He offers to us out of His grace, when we receive that, something happens as we become adopted into His family. And He will transform us. He will change our values and our character and our morals and our attitudes and our relationships. And all of these things over time will change. Galatians says that over time as we follow Jesus more and more, we will find love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

I mean, think about, those are the very things we all want. I mean, if we sat down and said, "I'd like to make a list of things I really want in my life. Let me see. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Yeah. Sign me up for all those things." Well, the Bible says these are the things that God will manifest more and more in your life as you follow Him. And if you receive His grace, and then you grow in your relationship with Him over time. So I love these stories of people who were radically transferred I think because I was such a wretch. What people saw of me was award-winning journalists at the Chicago Tribune and investigative reporter and all that stuff. What they didn't see was me literally drunk in the snow in an alley on Saturday night.

Dr. James Dobson: You're such a nice guy today.

Lee Strobel: Oh, God.

Dr. James Dobson: I can't imagine you being a bad guy.

Lee Strobel: Well, I'll tell you a story, and I tell the story in the book because I tell it as a way of saying God can forgive our deepest hurts and our deepest wrongs and sins. When I was in college living a wild life as an atheist, a girl I knew came up to me

and said, "Lee, I got bad news." I said, "What?" She said, "I'm pregnant." I said, "That's no big deal." I said, "Abortion is legal in New York. Well, just get an abortion. It's not a big deal. Believe me, look, I'll help you. I'll help you set it up. We'll get the money for it. It's not a big deal." And I facilitated the destruction of that innocent unborn life.

Dr. James Dobson: Your first?

Lee Strobel: It was not my child.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, I see.

Lee Strobel: This was a friend. It was somebody else who had gotten her pregnant, but I encouraged her to get the abortion. I helped set up the abortion. I facilitated the abortion. And that haunted me for many years. Even as an atheist, it haunted me because-

Dr. James Dobson: If there is no God, there is no justice, there is no right and wrong, why did that?

Lee Strobel: I used to commute down to the Chicago Tribune on the train and a guy who used to sit next to me almost every trip was a lawyer for pro-life organization. And we used to get in these little debates. And you know what? He convinced me a hundred times over that abortion was wrong. But you know what?

Dr. James Dobson: Isn't that interesting that God sat you down-

Lee Strobel: I know. What are the odds?

Dr. James Dobson: ... by the one guy you needed to talk to?

Lee Strobel: Exactly. But you know what? Even though he convinced me intellectually that this is wrong, I had a motive for it being right because it might be something that come in handy sometime. It wasn't until I came to faith in Christ that he really transformed my on that issue. I remember then repenting of that sin and receiving forgiveness for it, and yet it haunting me for a long time. Finally, one day I sat down and I wrote a letter to that child and said I was sorry and wrote a long letter, handwritten page, pouring out my heart to this unborn child.

Dr. James Dobson: You were not yet a believer?

Lee Strobel: No, I was a believer at that point.

Dr. James Dobson: I see.

Lee Strobel: It's interesting, I've lost the letter. And as I was writing the book, I thought about that because it was happened to be the, I think it was the 40th birthday that that child would've had. And I imagine 40 years he or she would be probably a

mom or a dad, maybe a grandparent who knows what wonderful relationships that person would've had and so forth. It always would haunt me around the birthday of that child that I engineered the destruction of.

Dr. James Dobson: You remembered it.

Lee Strobel: Yeah, absolutely. And so I wrote that letter. And the funny thing was, I thought I should get the letter and I'll quote it in my book, and then I thought, "I don't have it anymore." And I thought, "Isn't that great?" God somehow allowed me to lose that letter because you know what? It's forgiven. It is forgiven. There is no sin. There is no wrong that we commit that God will not forgive and wipe clean. It was just a reminder to me that it's a good thing that letter's gone because I don't need to dwell on it. It is forgiven and that I believe I'll meet that child in Heaven.

Dr. James Dobson: As far as the east is from the west.

Lee Strobel: Exactly. Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson; There is a story here and I want to make sure we get time for you to describe. It's a chapter entitled The Executioner. Tell us that story.

Lee Strobel: Yeah. This is a story about a gentleman who was a pastor in California named Christopher LaPel. He's a pastor of a church in Los Angeles. He was in Cambodia. He's from Cambodia. He survived the killing fields, that era of the Khmer Rouge when they took over the country. Millions of people were killed. I mean, it was a horrible, horrible era of Cambodia. He lost a cousin in the S-21, which is the torture center where 17,000 people came in and nobody came out alive. He survived. His parents were killed, his siblings were killed. He survived. He came to the United States, he's now a pastor.

So he went back to Cambodia to do evangelism and build churches. And so he was at a church growth conference that he was having and a guy he met came in. And this was a man who said, "I've done many terrible things in my life. I don't think God can forgive me." And he said, "No, no, no. God's grace will cover whatever. The cross is able to forgive all and God will forgive you. He will adopt you as his son." And this guy couldn't quite believe that God forgive him, but Christopher said, "Yes he can," so he baptized him. He led him to Christ, baptized him. This guy was changed. This guy who came to him became a church planter. He led his family to the Lord. He became like a Mother Teresa, helping mission organizations in Cambodia and living a life like a Mother Teresa in Cambodia.

Years later, Christopher LaPel found out the true identity of that man. His nickname was Duch. He was the commandant of S-21 torture center where his cousin was killed and 17,000 others died. He had led him to the Lord and baptized him and didn't know who he really was. So he goes back to Cambodia.

He is perhaps the only person who has been granted permission to visit Duch in prison. Duch's been now convicted of genocide. He will never get out of prison the rest of his life. He confessed to his crimes because now he's a Christian and he couldn't lie and say that he was innocent. And so he admitted and he's now in prison.

So Christopher visits him in the prison in Cambodia where this guy lives a joyful life, sharing Jesus with the guards and with the other prisoners knowing he'll never get out and carrying the weight of having killed 17,000 people, and yet knowing that God even forgave him and has adopted him as His son and given him the opportunity to share the message of grace to other prisoners.

So that's just one story in the book about how God can even forgive monsters. I mean, only a monster kills 17,000 people. We would call him a monster, and yet even so, he authentically repented of his sin. He opened his heart, he received forgiveness and this gift of eternal life purchased by Jesus on the cross. When Jesus died as his substitute to pay the penalty, Jesus paid the penalty and he offers forgiveness as a gift, he received that gift, he has been transformed.

Dr. James Dobson: That's called grace.

Lee Strobel: That's called grace, the ability to transform, "nice people" and "terrible people." We all need grace.

Roger Marsh: You're listening to Family Talk and I'm Roger Marsh jumping in for a quick moment here to remind you that you're listening to part 2 of a classic conversation featuring our own Dr. James Dobson and his special guest, Lee Strobel. Now, if you enjoy listening to Family Talk and Dr. Dobson's heartfelt conversations with guests on a variety of subjects, well why not consider signing up to receive Dr. Dobson's three monthly newsletter? All you have to do to sign up is to visit [drjamesdobson.org/newsletters](http://drjamesdobson.org/newsletters). That's D-R, [jamesdobson.org/newsletters](http://jamesdobson.org/newsletters). We pray that his personal messages to you each and every month will provide you wisdom and insight for your faith for such a time as this. And now let's return and hear the conclusion of today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Tell us about the Korean Orphan.

Lee Strobel: Well, that has a connection to you, because after I became a Christian and I'd received forgiveness through Christ, and yet on this lifelong quest for grace that I had been launched on because of my bad relationship with my dad, I was still piecing together the riddle of grace, still trying to understand the puzzle of grace. I was listening one Day to your radio program, and I talk about this in the book. I'm driving down the highway. And I could take you back to the exact place I was on Northwest Highway in Palatine Illinois, and I'm listening as I did every day to your show and I'm listening to you and you're interviewing a woman named Stephanie Fast who was abandoned by her mom after the war in

Korea at age four, was abandoned to the streets of Korea and lived several years as a street person, as just a toddler basically in Korea, until she was found on a trash heap dying basically by a World Vision nurse and taken to a World Vision orphanage there.

I heard her story on your show and I thought, "This is a huge piece of the grace puzzle. I need to meet her and talk to her." And so I did. I flew out to where she lives out on the West Coast and I spent time with her and her husband, Daryl, and I got to know them. They became friends. And I talk about her story in the book. But what's interesting about her story is, here she was nine years old. She weighed what? 35 lbs. She had boils all over her. She had scars all over her. She'd been assaulted as a child by horrible people. Her hair was mad. I mean she was a mess. And yet-

Dr. James Dobson: Unlovable.

Lee Strobel: Unlovable. Exactly. She thought. And this American couple came and they wanted to adopt a little boy, a baby, but they saw her. They reached out and they offered grace to her and said, "We want to adopt this child." And you know what she did? She spit in their face.

Dr. James Dobson: Yes, she did.

Lee Strobel: She did. And I'm saying, "Stephanie, how can you do that? They're opening up this window of opportunity." And then I thought, "Wait a second. I did the same thing to God." All the times when I was an atheist, when God was reaching out to me, when I would hear someone say something about God and I would feel a little bit of a tug, I would spit in his face. Or when I went to somebody's wedding and they would give a sermon about having a godly marriage, I thought, "Gosh, that sounds so great." And I felt tugged toward it, and then I spit in God's face. I did that a thousand times.

And you know what? That couple, even though she spit in their face, they came back the next day and they adopted her.

Dr. James Dobson: They loved her.

Lee Strobel: And that's like God. God, even though I spit in his face a thousand times, even though people listening may look back and say, "I've done that. I've felt tug toward God and I've spit in his face so to speak," you know what? He still adopted me just as that couple adopted her. And you know what she says? She said, "For me, I can honestly say that there is no event in my life that I am better without." And I thought here was a girl who had been assaulted as a child, who had lived on the streets, who ate mice and feel locusts and who scrounged and scratched, lived in foxholes in the winter and went through a horrific childhood that none of us can imagine, she says that everything has made her what she is today. And God has used her for-

Dr. James Dobson: As I recall, she was really kind of an urchin-

Lee Strobel: She was.

Dr. James Dobson: ... where gangs of children who didn't have families, they lived in sewers.

Lee Strobel: Yeah, on the sewages. But her story of adoption reminded me that even though... She looked at me at one point and said, "I know you had a father." And I said, "Yeah." And she said, "You told me that you didn't have a good relationship with your dad." And I said, "Well, that's true." And she said, "The Bible talks about an orphan of the heart." And she said, "We have more in common than you think. You are an orphan of the heart. And there's a lot of people that grow up and they've got parents, but you know what? They're an orphan of the heart. They haven't been loved in a way that's encouraged them and nurtured them through the years."

Dr. James Dobson: Lee, there is a sub theme in your book that I think we ought to end with here where you talk about other religions where people have to earn the love of God or his favor. And almost all of them are like that. Christianity is the only one where it is unmerited.

Lee Strobel: You're exactly right. There is no other world religion. There are a couple two little sects that it isn't really grace. It's sort of like grace, doesn't have the full expression of grace-like Christianity does with forgiveness and sin and eternal life and all that stuff. But we can say that there is no world religion like Christianity. Once there was a debate going on between theologians, "What makes Christianity unique?" and C.S Lewis walked in the room and said, "What are y'all talking about?" And they said, "What is it that makes Christianity unique?" And he said, "Well, that's easy. Grace. Every other world religion, you have to do something to earn your way to God. You have to use a Tibetan prayer wheel. You've got to go through a series of reincarnations. You've got to give alms to the poor. You've got to go on a pilgrimage. You've got to pray in a certain way. You've got to fulfill a certain number of requirements and then maybe, maybe you'll be saved by God."

Dr. James Dobson: In the Middle Ages, you had to flagellate yourself. You take a whip and hit your back till it was all bloody.

Lee Strobel: Exactly. It is unlike any other religion. You think about this, if you want to create a dysfunctional family, if you want to raise really messed up kids, then love them conditionally. "I'll love you if you do this or if you do..." You know what? Every other religion, that's what God says, "You got to do this and maybe I'll love you. Maybe I won't. Maybe I'll be good you, maybe I won't." You know what God in His grace showers us with this gift of love and forgiveness and grace, and that grows healthy people. Just like when you raise a child and you give him unconditional love and encouragement and so forth, how that raises a healthy child.

Somebody once said that all these other religions are spelled D-O. You got to do something to try to earn your way to God. You use a Tibetan prayer, reincarnations, whatever it is. Christianity is spelled D-O-N-E. It's done. It's finished. Jesus said in the cross, "It is finished." Jesus paid the penalty, paid the price, and all we have to do is receive this free gift of His grace.

Dr. James Dobson: What that means is you don't have to pay for your own sin. He paid for it. He paid it in full. And you don't have to earn it. It's just a gift. It is grace.

Lee Strobel: You know what it's like to me? To understand the difference between Christianity and all of the religions is like two country clubs. One country club says, "You want to come into our country club? All right. Well, we'll see. You can apply, but you have to meet all these requirements. You have to achieve a certain amount of social status. You got to achieve a certain amount of good deeds. You got to achieve this, this, this, this, this and this, and then maybe you'll be allowed in our country club."

Christianity is a country club that says, "You want in? Come on in. The membership has already been paid by Jesus. The door's open. The offer is out there. You just need to respond." That's the difference. I say, which country club is being snobbish? Not Christianity. Christianity is saying, "Come on in." Seems to me these other faiths are saying, "You know what? You got to try to earn something."

And here's the thing. It's like a salesman being told, "You've got to reach a certain sales quota or I'm going to fire you. But I'm not going to tell you what the quota is." How that would mess with your mind, and that's what these other religions say. God says, "You know what? Maybe I'll let you into heaven, but you have to achieve a certain amount of stuff, but I'm not going to tell you how much." It just creates this insecurity and anxiety in performance-based, frenetic kind of a life. Whereas Christianity says, "Relax in Christ."

Dr. James Dobson: Okay, Lee, as a place to end, we are being heard by people who have heard this for the first time and it sounds good. It sounds like something they have needed because they deal with guilt and sorrow and rejection.

Lee Strobel: Sure.

Dr. James Dobson: Tell them how they can find this Christ. What do they have to do?

Lee Strobel: You know what?

Dr. James Dobson: You just said that's nothing. Well, how do they get it?

Lee Strobel: Yeah, he's right there. All you have to do is say, "Talk to Him," which is prayer and just talk to Him and say, "God, I've not lived the kind of life you want me to live. I admit that. I've sinned. I've fallen short. I've done things. I knew they were



wrong even before I did them and I did them anyway. And I confess that and I want to turn from that. I want to receive this free gift of forgiveness and eternal life that your son purchased on the cross when He died for my sins. Thank you for loving me so much that you sense your son to die so that we could be reconciled forever. Help me to live the kind of life that you want me to live because from this moment on, I am yours."

Dr. James Dobson: And then find a good Bible-believing church that's so important with people who will help support you and pray for you and teach you and guide you.

Lee Strobel: Absolutely. That's so important. And then begins that adventure of transformation. We're "born again" when we receive Christ. We become a alive spiritually, in other words. But then it's that great adventure for the rest of our lives as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit, as over time He transforms our values and attitudes and relationships and marriage and all these things in what I think is the greatest adventure of available on planet earth, which is the adventure of following Jesus.

Dr. James Dobson: Lee, you and Leslie have been used by the Lord in many, many ways. I pray that he will continue to do that.

Lee Strobel: Thanks.

Dr. James Dobson: Thank you for being our guest again and please come back and see us.

Lee Strobel: Thank you so much.

Roger Marsh: Well, I pray that you feel the strength and tranquility of God's grace in your life today. What an earnest and encouraging conversation featuring our own Dr. James Dobson and his guest, Lee Strobel, today here on Family Talk. Now, if you missed any part of the program over the past couple of days, be sure to listen again at [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). On the broadcast page, you can also learn more about Lee and his book, *The Case for Grace* as well.

Good news from the JDFI as the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute is remastering Dr. Dobson's biblically-based Transforming Truths into one-minute audio messages. Hundreds of radio stations are carrying these new Dr. Dobson minutes each and every day, and we know that you'll enjoy listening to the wisdom of Dr. Dobson when you go to [drdobsonminute.org](http://drdobsonminute.org) - practical insights for young families that will strengthen marriages and help build better parenting skills. Again, you can find them at [drdobsonminute.org](http://drdobsonminute.org).

Did you know that the Family Talk broadcast is a completely listener-supported Christian radio program? It's because of you, your prayers, and your faithful financial support that we are able to continue to bring quality content to you and your family each and every day. Now, you can support us with a gift online when you go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). Or if you prefer, you can call us at 877-732-

6825. Please call in with your gift, with your prayer request or your prayer concern, and let us know how we can stand with you in this way. Again, the number to call for our customer constituent care team is 877-732-6825.

And finally, if you'd like to include a gift when writing to us through the US mail, our ministry mailing address is the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado. The zip code, 80949. Once again, you can write to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, or the JDFI for short, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado. The zip code, 80949. We look forward to hearing from you whether you write to us, email us or call us.

I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for making Family Talk a part of your day. And be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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