



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Seven Men Who Changed the World – Part 3

Guest(s): Eric Metaxas

Air Date: January 30, 2020

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Announcer: Today on Family Talk.

Eric Metaxas: We no longer want heroes. We want antiheroes. We want everybody to be torn down. Again, it's this idea that strength or any kind of greatness has to be pulled down into the gray mush of socialism, false egalitarianism. We're all equal. Well, if we're all equal, there's nothing great, and what does it matter? You just give me my vodka and my potatoes. It's like 1984. It's just pathetic. It's not the noble vision of man that God has.

Roger Marsh: Well, that is a sobering observation from our guest again here on Family Talk, bestselling author Eric Metaxas. In recent years, prominent historical leaders have been unfairly criticized and even vilified in the public square. Even the reputation of America's founding fathers have been condemned and drug through the mud. Now, despite this unjust treatment, the noble leaders from the past remain great role models for this and every generation. And in just a moment, we will conclude Dr. Dobson's fascinating conversation with author Eric Metaxas about the legacies of these great men.

Roger Marsh: Over the past few days you've heard about George Washington, William Wilberforce, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. You can read more comprehensively about these incredible figures in Eric Metaxas' book called Seven Men and the Secret of Their Greatness. Today they will pay tribute to a man who greatly impacted their lives, the late Chuck Colson. They will both share heartwarming stories of their friendship with Chuck and his sincere faith in Jesus Christ. Eric Metaxas will also mention the other names in his book and why we must admire their lives as well. Well, there's a lot of great content to get back into, so let's dive right back into this classic edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Dr. Dobson: Well, we've been talking for two days and now three about the book, Seven Men and the Secrets of Their Greatness. There's so much here to talk about and we have just not gotten through very much of the book. I wish we could talk about it all. But to kind of give people a context, the seven men that you have based this book on are ... I could name them, but you name them.

Eric Metaxas: Yes, it's George Washington, William Wilberforce, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Pope John Paul II, Eric Little, Jackie Robinson, Chuck Colson, And at the last minute Charlie Sheen was cut out of the book and I'm sorry. It was going to be eight men-

Dr. Dobson: Yeah, sure.

Eric Metaxas: ... but the publisher said too many pages. So yeah, Chuck Colson is the seventh man in the book, and I think I said in an earlier program, he was not going to be in the book because one thing you had to do to be in this book is you couldn't be a living person. When he was on his death bed, I said, "There is no doubt this great man whom I've had the privilege to know and love as a friend, he deserves to be in here.

Dr. Dobson: And Abraham Lincoln got bumped for Chuck Colson.

Eric Metaxas: Yeah, Lincoln got bumped. Well, you don't know these things until later, but I was raised in a traditional home in America. My parents are European immigrants. My dad came from Greece. My mom came from Germany. They were both pro Americans, because back then to get citizenship you had to actually believe in the ideas that America was at least good, if not great, and they did. So they raised me in a traditional home. I went to the Greek Orthodox Church. All the Greeks go the Greek Orthodox Church. But I never really heard the gospel. It was a very traditional kind of religion, good community. But by the time I got to Yale, I lost whatever faith I mean because you're just drinking the Kool-Aid there and it's secular humanist liberalism.

Eric Metaxas: I understood that. To this day, I understand it because of that time. So I graduated, floundered, didn't know what I wanted to do, and God in His amazing grace, visited me in a dream. There was a dear friend, Ed Tuttle, who'd been witnessing to me. It's a whole story. But the point is that around age 25 I had this dramatic conversion and suddenly I find myself, okay, I believe. I discover that, Oh yeah, there's this guy named Chuck Colson who is a Christian. I said, "Colson, I remember that name." When I discovered that this man who was this top Watergate figure was a born again, evangelical, devout believer, I suddenly said, "I got to read everything." That's when you said, "What is the influence?" That was the influence is that I said, "Here's a man whom I respect intellectually."

Eric Metaxas: This is the key in our culture because Christians are generally looked down upon as unthinking which, of course, is ironic, but we want him to get into that. So I said, "Here's a man, graduated from an Ivy league university, clearly super brilliant who believes all this stuff." So I started reading his books. In a way, it gave me the ability in a way to hold my head up to say that no, this is intellectually defensible. I read his books and I read the footnotes and the bibliographies. So he led me in a way into all kinds of reading. And then I would listen to BreakPoint and I just thought anything this guy's selling, I'm interested in. I mean I was so impressed with everything. I had the privilege of meeting him

in 1996. I think it was right before I got married. Handed him a copy of one of my children's books for his grandson with a letter.

Eric Metaxas: A week later I get a letter back from Chuck Colson. I just about dropped dead because I'm not used to getting letters from folks like that. He said something about, "We'll keep your stuff in our files. Maybe our paths will ... I thought, "Oh sure, I would love that, but that's not going to happen." Well, a year later, on my answering machine there's a message from his office, BreakPoint. "We're looking for writers and researchers and stuff." I thought I would do anything to work with Chuck Colson. So I had the privilege of working at BreakPoint as a writer, didn't work closely with Chuck. But I was around him at different times. Just always loved him. And then just in the last few years before he passed away, he flipped out over the Bonhoeffer book. He loved that book so much.

Eric Metaxas: He was talking about it everywhere and I thought, "Oh my goodness." Now I'm getting this kind of father's blessing from this hero of mine. So in the last few years I had much more time with him.

Dr. Dobson: Well, he was one of my closest friends, Eric. A board member in 1981 said, "You got to meet this guy, Chuck Colson." I had only been doing radio since 1977 and so I was still very young in this profession. I was at USC School of Medicine. My board members said, "You really ought to invite him to come to your office. The two of you have got a lot in common." So I did. He came and it was the first time we'd met. We sat down and we talked for four hours without stopping. And then we walked into the studio and did a five-hour broadcast. I'm telling you, we cut it into five programs.

Dr. Dobson: It's called The Use and Abuse of Power. I've aired it many times. And then we went to dinner together that night with Patty and Shirley. He had a great influence on me. We talked about every two weeks or three weeks. We'd be on a phone and we had so much to talk about. I was greatly influenced by him and I was just glad to see that you selected him as one of the seven-

Eric Metaxas: It thrilled me.

Dr. Dobson: ... great men.

Eric Metaxas: I mean the fact that I could do that, I can't tell you how it thrills me. I was with Patty Colson, the idea that I could tell her and Emily, Chuck's daughter, "And the seventh man is Chuck." It just makes me, I want to sing. Max, his autistic grandson, changed him. It's typical of God to use something like that to get to you, that you got to be down on the carpet crawling literally with your grandson. You've got to be down to his level. He's autistic. You got to really work hard to reach him. Chuck wasn't used to doing that. Chuck was used to people coming to him. He's a big shot, next to the president at age 39. Well, God reached him through his autistic grandson in this beautiful way.

Eric Metaxas: I could see Chuck mellowed considerably from when I was working with him to when I knew him in just in the last few years. You could see that somehow.

Dr. Dobson: There are a lot of people in our listening audience who don't know about Chuck Colson and don't know his story. You describe it in, what, 20 pages or so?

Eric Metaxas: Right. Yeah. The short version.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah, give us the short version.

Eric Metaxas: Well, the short version is that he was brilliant. He was a lawyer. He got involved in politics. He worked with the Nixon campaign. He was so brilliant that Nixon said, "Let's get guy on our team." He hired him and he made him special counsel to the US president. So here in his late 30s, he's got an office literally next door to the office of the president of the United States, part of his inner team. We all know what happened, something called Watergate. They were so eager to win, this is a lesson for us Christians, so eager to win that they turned a blind eye towards some things that they ought not to have.

Eric Metaxas: There was an amoral and sometimes an immoral atmosphere and Chuck was a part of that. Because he was so brilliant and so forceful and so desirous of winning, he would do anything. People famously said that he would run over his grandmother if it could get the president re-elected. It was this kind of attitude.

Dr. Dobson: He claims he never said that.

Eric Metaxas: Yeah, no, he never said it. He said something related to it, but anyway, it captures who he was at that time. Well, what happened? Somehow in the middle of this, Jesus comes into the life of Chuck Colson. He is dramatically changed. He meets with Tom Phillips, the then head of Raytheon Corporation up in the Boston area. Tom Phillips reads to him from the Gospel of John, reads to him from CS Lewis's Mere Christianity, and it gets to Chuck. He knew something was wrong in his life. Something's just not quite right and suddenly God comes into his life. I write this in the book that he's by the side of the road blubbering, this White House hatchet man, former Marine. Somehow God got ahold of him. It just took some time.

Eric Metaxas: Chuck had to think it through, but he comes to faith, and no one would believe it. The press made light of it. They mocked him because I mean to this day, no kidding, 35, 40 years later, there are people in the Washington press corps who still don't believe that this guy's conversion was authentic. So this is a man whose life was dramatically changed. His book on the subject's called Born Again. Again, I hope people will read my chapter and it would lead them to read his whole book, Born Again. He turns down a plea bargain because as Watergate breaks, everything, all kinds of stuff is pointing at him.

Eric Metaxas: His lawyer says, "Look, I got a plea bargain for you. I will save you from going to jail. You can avoid jail time. Take the plea bargain." Chuck says, "Well, I've become a Christian now. I can't lie. You're asking me to tell a lie that I did something I did not do to avoid jail time. I can't do that." Just like the story of Eric Little when they said to him, "Are you out of your mind? You're turning down a gold medal. You cannot do this." Chuck's lawyer said, "Are you out of your mind? You had an office next to the president of the United States. You're going to go to jail. You need to do this."

Eric Metaxas: Chuck said, "I will not do it." Noble sacrifice, heroic sacrifice. He ends up going to jail. He gets out of jail. What does he do when he gets out of jail? Again, the thing that everybody would say, "No, Chuck, just put it behind you." He says, "No, I'm going to go back for the rest of my life. I'm going to go back into those prisons because the love of Jesus for those men. Jesus loves me and He loves those men and He put His love in me for those men. I'm going to go back. I'm going to minister to prisoners." Here's a guy who's on Air Force One doing all this stuff. He is now going into smelly prisons around the whole world, not just in the US, ministering, praying with people on death row.

Eric Metaxas: You talk about an authentic conversion. So this man was the real deal. I had the privilege of getting to know him, so I can say that I know he was the real deal. He was the real deal.

Dr. Dobson: Let me tell you a story you may not know. As a matter of fact, there are probably very few people who know this story. But Chuck and I were talking about Watergate and about the break-in that led to Watergate and the Pentagon Papers. There was a reason why Chuck wanted those Pentagon Papers not to be released. It's because within them there was evidence that the Russian limousine had been bugged and there was only one place where that information could have come from that was in those papers. That was from the Russian limousine. Of course the Russians, when they read it, they realized that and it was all over.

Dr. Dobson: If Chuck could have gone on the witness stand and told that story, he would not only probably not gone to prison, but would probably have been vindicated, at least in the eyes of some.

Eric Metaxas: We have breaking news on your program. You don't normally have breaking news on the program. That's extraordinary.

Dr. Dobson: That's one more element of his greatness. The other one is when I told you a minute ago that we were talking about the use and abuse of power. I'll never forget the way he described that. He said that he was at the pinnacle of power in the White House. He could call up a detachment of Marines and send them anywhere in the world. He could make one phone call and get the Marine helicopter to land on the White House lawn. He had all of that power and he went from there to prison, being strip-searched, and then being in a cell at night where the guards would come by and shine a light in his eyes.

Dr. Dobson: He went from complete total power, one of the most powerful men in the world to a man who was absolutely devoid of power, and the Lord used that descent-

Eric Metaxas: Isn't that amazing?

Dr. Dobson: ... to talk to him.

Eric Metaxas: It's beautiful. It's poetry. I mean it's the beautiful picture of a man who, because he was brought so low from such a height, was able to rise again in a way that we actually can celebrate. Because if he had just achieved, when people say, "Well, he was the youngest guy to do this and he was youngest guy ..." Who cares? The longer you live, the more you realize who cares about all these "achievements?" It's not only about winning, it's about character. We've got this Nike, shameful Tiger Woods ad about winning covers everything. What bologna. What a satanic, sick, perverse message that winning covers everything.

Eric Metaxas: I mean can you imagine? Chuck Colson losing is what led him to the greatest victory of his life, which was the last 35 years of his life. In so many cases it happened in my life that I was brought low and that I found God in the midst of that. I mean the idea that it's all about winning. That is just the worst idea there is. I mean I'm going to coin a phrase here on the show. Winning is for losers. There you go. I just got to tell you that Chuck Colson lost and he won in the real way, in a way that he wouldn't have been in this book if he had kept out of prison. He would never be in this book. If he had had a successful law practice and just moved on, he wouldn't be somebody who was celebrated and celebrated by prisoners all across America and the world who have him to thank for all kinds of things. So he's just a truly great man and a friend.

Dr. Dobson: I think it was in Born Again that he described his conversion. For a man to have the kind of greatness that he was capable of, he was so bright. Tom Phillips led him to the Lord. They were sitting in a car in a driveway and Chuck saw his sin. He bawled like a baby out there and gave his heart to the Lord. It is a remarkable story.

Eric Metaxas: Yeah. I tell the story in the book. In fact, he was driving, crying, and he was afraid he was going to crash because he was crying so much that he pulls over to the side of the road, so someplace on the side of the road. I say this in the book. How many motorists passed by? There was a car parked by the side of the road. In that car was one of the great famous figures of America crying as God came into his heart. That was the greatest moment of Chuck's life.

Dr. Dobson: We're talking to Eric Metaxas. He is the author of the book, Seven Men and the Secret of Their Greatness. We've talked about three or four of them. I want to ask you about one that we have not. We've only mentioned, I think. How did Eric Little get in this book? I mean he did a great thing at the Olympics. Remind people of what he did. But how does he rise to the level of George Washington and these others?

Eric Metaxas: There's no ranking system here. These are, as I say, it's a subjective list. I just said, "Here are seven men worthy of emulation. Young men especially, but everyone, it's not just for men, need to know of these great men and what they did. In the case of Eric Little, it's almost like a paint by numbers illustration of what I'm talking about, the secret of their greatness. Here's a man who was literally the fastest man on planet Earth. There was no one who could beat this man in the 100 yards, fastest man on the planet. They knew it. Guaranteed gold medal at the 1924 Olympics. He was a Scotsman. Scotland had never earned a gold medal or, I think, any medal. So his nation was just ready to celebrate.

Eric Metaxas: He goes. He takes the ship across the channel from England to France and goes to Paris. And then he finds out that the first heat is on a Sunday. Well, serious Christians in the Presbyterian mold in those days took the Sabbath very seriously. He said, "Before God, I cannot run on the Sabbath." Well, they just about lost their minds. "Excuse me, sir. We're talking about a gold medal. We're talking about national honor." Well, he said, "Yes, that's terrible, but I'm going to put God first. I'm not going to do it." Unbelievable level of strength, courage to stand against king practically at that point and to say, "I'm going to follow God and I'm going to take the opprobrium of millions perhaps for doing this, but I'm going to do what I think is right before God." Well, this is by the way, all told in the movie Chariots of Fire-

Dr. Dobson: Chariots of Fire.

Eric Metaxas: ... which a new generation doesn't know about. But when I was young that was just what an amazing ... Go rent that movie. But I have to say, the fact that he's willing to do that, it's staggering. That kind of heroism, that nobility, which every one of the men in this book puts forth, I say we need to talk about this. We need to celebrate it. We need to be lifted up as for young men especially as a role model. And by the way, it has a crazy happy ending. He ends up running in another race, which he's not even supposed to get any medal in. But what choice did he have?

Eric Metaxas: He couldn't run the 100. It was on a Sunday. So he runs in the 400 and by God's truly amazing grace, he gets the gold medal. If you read in the book, I lay out exactly why that never should have ... It doesn't even make any sense, except God intervenes even in sporting events. But then he goes on to a life on the mission field in China. I will not tell that story now for time, but he does things in China that rival the story I have just told. So this is just a life, it needs to be known. Again, there are plenty more than these seven. By the way, there are two athletes in this book. The other one we haven't talked about, Jackie Robinson, incredibly humble.

Eric Metaxas: The reason I knew about that story is because when I was working for Chuck Colson, I found out that Jackie Robinson was a devout Christian. I said, "You got to be kidding me?" And then I did some research and I found out that not only was he a devout Christian, but the reason he was chosen to do what he did, to break the color barrier in 1947 in baseball, was because he was a Christian.

Branch Rickey, the general manager of the Dodgers, people don't know this story. This story was not really told in the movie. It's a great movie, 42, but it doesn't get into this. Branch Rickey was a devout Christian, would not go to a game on a Sunday. He says, "I want to do this." He felt this is God's call to do the right thing, to break the color barrier.

Eric Metaxas: But he picked Jackie Robinson because he knew he could persuade this Christian man that turning the other cheek is God's command. In their meeting, again, I write this. In the book, Seven Men, I tell all the details. But the short version is that in their initial meeting, Branch Rickey, who is not in the movie, reaches down and pulls out a book titled The Life of Christ and opens it up to a passage on the Sermon on the Mount and reads to Jackie Robinson, this young athlete, reads to him the words from the Sermon on the Mount about turn the other cheek. He says, "In order for us to do this, you need to say to me that you will obey this command of our Lord that you will ... Because if you don't, we're going to lose. We're going to be set back 10, 15 years."

Eric Metaxas: Jackie Robinson as a Christian understood, yes, this is the right thing to do. So again, noble sacrifice. Lays down the, many would say, legitimate right to fight back, lays it down for the greater good out of obedience to God's command. It's just one of those stories that needs to be told. Why don't most Americans know Jackie Robinson achieved this victory on his knees, that he prayed every night. Why don't we know the story of branch Rickey doing this? Sometimes I just love to get out this information that nobody knows at the heart of civil rights history in America. That story needs to be told. It's a noble sacrifice, if you want somebody to emulate as a young man, Jackie Robinson.

Dr. Dobson: He tolerated unbelievable discrimination and hatred.

Eric Metaxas: We can't imagine.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah. Well, Eric Metaxas, my goodness. It's been wonderful having you here for these three days. I want to invite you back sometime when you're coming through this part of the world to tell us the story of your salvation. There is a story there that needs to be heard. Thanks for being with us. This has been a fascinating discussion. God be with you. We're going to be watching your career with great interest.

Eric Metaxas: Well, pray for me, please. I can't tell you what a joy it is to be with you here today. I'm already scheming how I can get back. So thank you.

Dr. Dobson: Okay.

Roger Marsh: What an enlightening three days of broadcasts we've had with Eric Metaxas here on Family Talk. It's so important to honor the prominent figures of our history, and I honestly can't imagine what our world would be like without the men we've been talking about over the past three programs. Their dedication,

character, and faith are truly commendable characteristics for each of us to follow today.

Roger Marsh: Visit our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org to discover more about Eric Metaxas' bestselling books or his popular radio show. Once you're there, you'll also find the order a CD button, and you can use that to request a copy of this complete interview on audio CD. You'll find all of this when you go to today's broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org. Now, we'd also love to hear what you thought about this three part interview here on Family Talk, and we encourage you to visit our Facebook page and share your comments there. You'll find our profile by searching for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Roger Marsh: Once you're there, be sure to comment on any of the past three broadcast posts. We'd enjoy hearing how all of our radio programs are impacting you and your family. So again, all you have to do is search for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk on Facebook and then leave your thoughts on any of the three broadcast posts. We can't wait to hear from you and be sure to like and share them once you post them.

Roger Marsh: Well, that's all the time we have for this week. We greatly appreciate you listening to us every day and for supporting this ministry financially and with your prayers as well. Be sure to join us again Monday for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Have a blessed weekend.

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

Roger Marsh: Who doesn't want to be encouraged to make their marriage stronger? Hey, it's Roger Marsh here for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Our new Family Talk smartphone mobile app is designed especially to uplift your marriage in a way that makes it easy for both husbands and wives to find great resources. Loaded with articles, broadcast, and videos, the new Family Talk app will provide you with practical tips on making your marriage all it can be. The customized Family Talk app tailors content around where you are in life. So whether you're a husband or a wife, dad, or a mom, the Family Talk app will provide you with daily inspiration to strengthen your marriage and invest into the lives of your children. The app also allows you to set personal reminders around life's greatest priorities, your faith and family. Go to drjamesdobson.org/app. Again, that's drjamesdobson.org/app to download your free customized Family Talk app today.