



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Case for Heaven – Part 2

Guest(s): Lee Strobel

Air Date: December 2, 2022

[Listen to the broadcast](#)

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: Welcome back to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and today we're going to hear another installment of our 2022 Best of Broadcast Collection. By the way, if you would like to have the entire 18 interview set on six CDs or available as one audio stream, we would love to make it available to you and we will. All you have to do is reach out to us at drjamesdobson.org/bestof2022. That's drjamesdobson.org/ the word best, the word of, and then 2022. We'll be happy to send you the entire 18 interview set as our way of thanking you for a suggested donation of \$50 or more in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. This would be a great addition to your personal ministry library, but also make an excellent Christmas gift for someone special. Maybe for your kids who have kids, or for that someone special in your family or in your life who definitely needs to hear the good news of the gospel.

Now, in just a moment, we're going to get into a conversation which is part two of a continuing discussion featuring our own Dr. Tim Clinton and award-winning journalist and author Lee Strobel. If you've ever thought about what is the answer to the question, what happens after we die, you are really in for a treat with this special conversation today. Please enjoy the second part of this popular interview on *The Case for Heaven* right here on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Welcome back to Family Talk. Have you ever asked questions like, what happens after we die? Is Heaven for real? What evidence do we have? Well, that's the content of our broadcast today and our special guest, Lee Strobel. Lee, great to have you back. Thank you for joining us.

Lee Strobel: Oh my pleasure, Tim, always great to be with you.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lee, we talked yesterday about that very issue, is Heaven real? But I want to ask you, and let's just recast this, if you will, what happens when we die? And yesterday you talked about near-death experiences.

Lee Strobel: Right. Near-death experiences really do give an example and show in a very concrete way, what happens when we die. Then the Bible reflects this as well, that at the moment of death, our spirit, our soul, our consciousness, separates from our body and remains conscious either in the presence of God or away from Him, for a period of time, it's called the intermediate state. And then ultimately at the end of history, when Jesus returns, we are reunited with our now resurrected bodies. We go through final judgment and then we spend eternity in a very physical Heaven or a very physical Hell. So there's kind of those two phases to the afterlife and near-death experiences are consistent with Christian theology. And they give us a little bit of a glimpse into the fact that yes, indeed, our awareness continues even after we're declared dead.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lee, in your research, what have you found out about what people believe about Heaven and Hell?

Lee Strobel: It's fascinating. People grasp at straws a lot. The Bible says in Ecclesiastes that, "God has placed eternity in our hearts." And I think that means there's a desire in all of us to live forever. And people approach that in different ways, even people who are not believers in God, try to live on forever through writing a great book, through painting a masterpiece, through designing a cathedral, having their name on a building, to be a footnote in history, so they will somehow be remembered for history. Some people do horrible things. Mark David Chapman murdered John Lennon because he said, "I wanted to steal a bit of his fame. I wanted my name to live on in history." Other people do positive things to try to live on. Some people have big families thinking, at least the family name, at least my name will be remembered in my family through the generations. And yet if you ask most people, do you remember, or do you know the name, the first names of your great-great-grandparents? Most people don't, I don't know the first names of my great-great-grandparents. The truth is we're going to be forgotten and the truth is you're going to be dead anyway.

So the real question is, what does reality show? Truth is what is consistent with reality and so we want to discover, what is reality, what really happens? I don't care about legend, make believe, wishful thinking. I care about what does the evidence show. And when we have an expert like Jesus of Nazareth, who Himself died and was resurrected on the third day, who proved He's the son of God, we ought to listen to what He says. And when we look at these near-death experiences, many of which are corroborated, we see evidence that supports what the Bible says about the fact we have a soul that continues to live on.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lee, yesterday, we also talked briefly about how you had a brush with death that got your attention. And when you're flat on your back, Lee, the Scripture that comes up in my mind is, "It's appointed unto men once to die." Where they say death and taxes, the two sure things in life. But Lee, that moment does come. And the truth is, we think about it often. There's things in life that trigger us, that take us to this place. And I want to say at times, it's the work of the Holy Spirit, that God-

Lee Strobel: I agree.

Dr. Tim Clinton: ... He grabs our attention. And like you said, "He set eternity in our hearts period," Ecclesiastes 3:11 bang. Now, what are you going to do about it?

Lee Strobel: Yeah. I thank God for the brush with death that I had. I mean, as difficult as it was at the time and as scary as it was, because nobody wants to go through the process of dying. Even if you really are convinced that you're going to spend eternity with God, the process of death is not something anybody looks forward to with any relish. And so, you want a sense of security and certainty in those last moments. And so if it's important to us then, it ought to be important to us now.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lee, as a part of your work in *The Case for Heaven*, God blessed you with an opportunity to do an interview with a real champion of the faith, the late Luis Palau. I'd love for you to share with our listeners a little bit about that interview and what it did to your heart.

Lee Strobel: Yeah. Luis was my friend, but also my hero. He's one of the great evangelists of history. He shared his faith through his festivals around the planet with a billion people.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Unbelievable.

Lee Strobel: It's unbelievable. Such a warm and winsome and wonderful Christ follower. And he knew he was dying. He had stage four cancer and I thought, "Wouldn't it be interesting for my book to interview someone who's on the precipice of entering into Heaven?" And so I had the last interview with Luis before he died. I went out to Portland, spent the day with his wife, Pat, and with Luis. And it was a profound experience to hear from this man who was just... his bags were packed. He was ready to go. He knew that he had no hope in this world of surviving this cancer. And he looked so forward to going to Heaven.

But the one thing he said to me, Tim, that I'll never forget, and I think every follower Jesus on the planet ought to listen to, is when he looked up at me before he died and he said, "Lee, when you get to the end of your life, and all is said and done, you will never regret being courageous for Christ." And I thought, "Wow, that's powerful." That means different things for different people. It might mean for some people, take a social risk by inviting someone to come to church. It could mean different things for different people.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lee, when my dad was dying, in my final conversations with him, I remember him saying, "Tim, if you serve Him, I promise you, you'll be blessed." And then he looked at me and said, this Lee, "Tim it's because of Him, I'll see you again."

Lee, I remember the last phone call, I was in Atlanta. We were at a Christian Booksellers conference; I was in the Omni Hotel. And it was a call from my sister

who said, "Hey, you need to talk to dad." And I said, "Okay." I stepped out of the room. And he said, "Tim," I said, "Hey dad, how are you?" He said, "Tim, I'm going to the kingdom of our God." And I tried to put it off. And I said, "I know, you talked about it since we were kids." He said, "Tim, I just want you to know how much I love you and want you to be faithful in the midst of that."

It's interesting in your conversation with Luis, he said after he meets Jesus, he wants to see somebody special in his life, Lee.

Lee Strobel:

Yeah. And it was his father who died when Luis was just 10 years old. And his father had a radical conversion in south Argentina where they lived and had come to faith and had shared the gospel all through the little communities around where they lived. But Luis didn't know him very well, because he died when Luis was so young and he just looks forward to being with him. And I can relate to that because I had a very difficult relationship with my father. He told me on the eve my high school graduation, "I don't have enough love for you to fill my little finger." So we had this conflict in our life and I take a lot of blame for it, because I was a bratty little snotty nose kid that pushed his buttons a lot. But we never really reconciled after that blowout argument we had on the eve of my high school graduation where he said these things, that I hope he didn't really mean.

And I was talking to a theologian. He said, "Yeah, but Lee, think about the fact your dad, you believe was a Christian." I said, "Yeah, I believe he was a Christian." And he said, "He's going to be in Heaven. And when you get there, the first thing that you're going to do probably, and the first thing that your dad's going to do when you get to Heaven is reconcile. You're both going to be 1000% enthusiastic about reconciling." And then he said, "And then Lee, you know what? You're going to be able to spend eternity in Heaven in a relationship with your earthly father, that you didn't enjoy in this world, in a sinless environment, in a perfect way, you'll be able to experience a perfect father-son relationship that you never had." And I thought that's something to look forward to.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

I love that. I do. Lee, there's an urgency in this message too. In the movie, there's a scene of you and it's built around your relationship with your brother who died during the pandemic. Do you mind sharing a little bit of that?

Lee Strobel:

Yeah. My brother was an atheist, very outspoken atheist. I remember when he asked me to perform his wedding, because I was the only clergy he knew. He said, "Could you do the wedding for me, but not mention God?" So he was very antagonistic toward faith and toward God. He had heart surgery, right as the pandemic was beginning, they put him in a nursing home to recover and he ended up dying. I hope that in those final moments, he called out to God.

Sometimes people ask me, "What about my brother or my dad or whoever, who wasn't a believer and they died?" And I say, "Well, wait a minute. You don't know what happens in those final moments." I wasn't there when my brother

knew probably in the final hours, that he was going to die. He knew the gospel. I hope and pray that he reached out to God and received His free gift of forgiveness and eternal life in those final moments of his life. We just don't know. We can't know what people decide in those final moments.

My father-in-law, was an atheist and he had a stroke and he was at home, they told him he was going to die. He was going to have a series of these strokes and one of them was going to kill him. And so I sent out my wife and his wife, who's a Christian. I said, "Give me one more shot at Al." And so, I sat down with Al and I said, "Al, I don't want to be in Heaven without you, your daughter, your wife, your grandchildren. We don't want to be in heaven without you Al, please." And I shared the gospel with him and it was like a talking to a stone wall. And finally, I said, "Satan unhand him," because I just pictured Satan grabbing him and just dragging him to Hell. And finally, after about 45 minutes of reasoning with him and cajoling him and talking to him, I could see he was softening. And I said, "Al, you want to receive Jesus right now, don't you?" And he had tears running down his cheeks. And he said, "Yeah, I do."

And so, he prayed at age 89, after a lifetime of atheism, to receive Jesus as his forgiver and his leader. And then his wife and my wife came back and I told him the news and we said, "Let's have a party." And we were cooking dinner. And then he had another stroke and we called an ambulance and he got into an ambulance with my wife, his daughter, and they rode to the emergency room and they put him on a gurney. And as they wheeled him into the emergency room, he looked up and he said to Leslie, my wife, he said, "Tell Lee, thanks." And he went into the emergency room and he lingered for a while. And then he died. The last cogent conversation of his life, he received Jesus as his forgiver and leader. And I will spend eternity and his daughter and his wife and his grandchildren, will spend eternity together because of that.

I tell people, "You don't know what happens in those final moments."

- Dr. Tim Clinton: I remember a story from my dad, Lee, pastored nearly 60 years in the hills of central-
- Lee Strobel: Wow.
- Dr. Tim Clinton: ... Pennsylvania. But my dad talked about this hard living guy that we grew up with. He said, "Tim, he wound up in the hospital, Clearfield Hospital and he was dying and I made my way down there." He said, "I grabbed the hand of him. And I said, 'You want to know Christ, don't you?'" It's never too late until that moment, you know that Lee?
- Lee Strobel: Absolutely.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And you know what he did? My dad said, "Tim, his heart tendered, softened right up." And he said, "Pastor Jim, yes, I do," led him to Christ. And his family celebrated, they just couldn't believe it. Lee, it's like the thief on the cross.

Lee Strobel: That's right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Thou art the Son of God, he didn't go through all that stuff we put people through, there was an acknowledgement of Christ the Savior.

Lee Strobel: Yeah, that moment. I think back of when I was an atheist, I lived a narcissistic, drunken self-absorbed life. I was a liar. I was a cheater. And when my wife became a believer, I thought it was the worst news I could get. I spent two years investigating the evidence and became convinced that Jesus didn't just claim to be the Son of God. He backed up that claim by returning from the dead. And I remember that moment in my life when I sat down and I thought, "In light of this avalanche of evidence, that points to the truth of Christianity, it would take more faith to maintain my atheism than to become a Christian." In other words, the scales just decisively tipped at that moment.

There I was in my 30s. I had lived a very dark and sinful life and God came in at that moment. And I'll never forget my daughter, she was five years old when I came to faith, and all she had known the first five years of her life, was a dad who was angry, absent, coming home drunk. I remember once I kicked a hole in the living room wall, just out of rage, that's all she knew. But starting at that moment, when I put my trust in Christ, she started to watch, "Something's changing with my dad. Something's different with my dad. Something's new with my dad." And she looked and she watched my life for about four or five months.

And then one Sunday morning, she came up to Leslie. You know what she said? She said, "I want God to do for me what he's done for daddy." And she came to faith that day as a five year old, and today is married to a seminary graduate. She writes fiction novels, Christian books. She's a mother of two of my precious grandchildren and we're the best of friends today. And same thing with my son, saw the difference in his family, came to faith at a young age. And now he's a PhD in theology at Biola University. And so God rescued our family. There is hope.

When Leslie was a new Christian, she met some women at church and she said, "I don't have any hope for my husband. He is the hardheaded, hardhearted legal editor of the Chicago Tribune. He will never bend his knee to Jesus." And this one precious saint named Sylvia, put her arm around Leslie's shoulder and kind of pulled her to the side and said to Leslie, "Oh Leslie, no one is beyond hope." And she gave her a verse from the Old Testament, Ezekiel 36:26 that says, "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and I will put a new spirit within you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." And my wife prayed that prayer for me every single day for two years, until God got

ahold of my soul, and I came to faith on November 8th 1981. And you know what, I say the same thing to your listeners, no one is beyond hope.

Sometimes the most unlikely candidates come to faith and then all we can say at that moment is, only God.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Only God.

Lee Strobel: Only God. All the credit, all the glory goes to Him because only God can change lives the way He does.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lee, I guess in closing, as we wrap up our time today, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved and thy house. Lee, we talked about afterlife and in the conversation, it's about heaven and the reality of hell. I asked you yesterday, and I want to come back to it, the best news about Heaven and the worst news about Hell.

Lee Strobel: Best news about Heaven is it's true, it's real. Worst news about Hell that it's real. But the best news of all is that there is redemption. There is hope. There is eternal life available to each and every person, not because of what we do, but because of Jesus who paid the penalty, we deserved, for the sins that we've committed, and offers forgiveness and eternal life as a free gift of His grace. Anyone who receives that repentance and faith, will know with certainty, that you will spend eternity in God's presence.

Dr. Tim Clinton: So, the question Lee is, how can I be sure of Heaven? What must I do? I guess, like the Philippian jailer said to Paul, "What must I do to be saved?"

Lee Strobel: Yeah. I think of John 1:12, which basically sums up, says, "Believe plus receive equals become." To believe that Jesus is who He claimed to be, the unique Son of God, who proved it by returning from the dead. And to receive in a simple prayer of repentance and faith, where we confess that we've sinned, we've fallen short of God's standards. We've done things wrong. We knew they were wrong before we did them and we did them anyway, to confess that and to turn from that and to receive this free gift of forgiveness and eternal life that Jesus purchased for us on the cross. You can do it right now. You can pray a simple prayer, say:

"Lord, as best I can, I do believe that you are the Son of God. You proved it by returning from the dead. And I confess the obvious, which is that I'm a sinner. I know that, I haven't lived the perfect life. I know that. And I want to turn from that. And in an attitude of repentance and faith, I want to receive. Receive this free gift of forgiveness and eternal life that you purchased for me on the cross, when you died as my substitute, to pay for all of my sin. Thank you for loving me so much that you went through the torture of the cross, 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. Tim Clinton: Most important decision the world, isn't it Lee?

Lee Strobel: Absolutely it is.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And if you pray that prayer right now, you believe Lee, that, that person is saved, is born again-

Lee Strobel: Yeah, John, 1:12, "Believe plus receive equals become."

Dr. Tim Clinton: One day, Paul said He's going to come again, to receive us unto Himself, so that we can spend eternity all together. What a glorious day.

Lee, one of my treasured possessions in life is a Bible from my dad. And inside the front of that Bible, which by the way is worn out, he had many Bibles. I've got a few of them, but this particular Bible, there's a picture of my mother in the front of that Bible. And the words written around it were, "How I have missed you. What a grand reunion someday soon." That's what this is all about. One day, we'll see our Lord and Savior, face to face, and we'll spend eternity together. As Dr. Dobson says, "Make sure and be there."

Lee Strobel: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Lee, thank you for the work that you've let God do in your heart and the testament of that. And we tip our hat to you and pray that God would continue to give you a strong voice as you draw people to the cross and the gift of salvation.

Lee Strobel: I appreciate that. Thank you, Tim.

Dr. Tim Clinton: What a delightful interview. Again, the book is, *The Case For Heaven* and the movie, *The Case For Heaven*. Lee, it's going to be coming out on video on demand and streaming?

Lee Strobel: Yes. We don't know the platform yet. We'll get the word out when it comes out and people can see it. We're also talking about a theatrical release in Latin America and Australia. So we'll see how that unfolds. My hope is that... During the movie, they asked me, "What do you want written on your tombstone?" And my attitude is I'd like them to write, "He dragged as many people to Heaven with him as he could." That's our goal.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's a noble goal. Hey, on behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, and the team at Family Talk, again, we tip the hat to you and say, thank you for joining us.

Lee Strobel: Blessings to you as well.

Roger Marsh: And with that we conclude Dr. Tim Clinton's conversation with Lee Strobel on the topic of Heaven, today here on Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and if you'd

like more information about Lee Strobel or any of our broadcast guests this month, go to drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. Tim Clinton's conversation with Lee Strobel is the first in our 2022 Best of Broadcast Collection that we'll be featuring all throughout the month of December here on Family Talk. We would love for you to have the entire 18 interview set. To get yours, all you have to do is reach out to us online at drjamesdobson.org/bestof2022. That's drjamesdobson.org/bestof2022. We'll be happy to send you your own copy of this year's collection as our way of thanking you for a suggested donation of \$50 or more in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

And keep in mind, during the month of December, you can make your donation dollars go even further, thanks to the generosity of some special friends of our ministry. We have a matching grant in place. That means that right now your gift of any amount to the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute will be doubled. You can donate online at drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org, or give us a call. You can make a donation over the phone when you call 877-732-6825. And of course, when you're talking to a member of our customer care team, they'll be happy to answer any questions you have about the ministry. They'll be happy to pray with and for you as well. Again, that number is 877-732-6825.

Well, thanks so much for listening to Family Talk today. Hope you have a blessed weekend, and be sure to join us again on Monday for another one of our Best of 2022 Broadcast Collection airing right here on Family Talk.

Announcer:

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