



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Crossfire Ministries: Evangelism Through Sports – Part 2

Guest(s): Randy Shepherd and Jamie Johnson

Air Date: March 10, 2023

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Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk, it's a Ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

Roger Marsh: Welcome back to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and on yesterday's program we heard part one of Dr. Tim Clinton's powerful conversation with Randy Shepherd and Jamie Johnson. They discussed how God utilized basketball and their friendship, and gave them a heart for ministry to share the gospel. Now, on today's program, we're going to hear part two of that conversation and we'll learn more about the work Randy and Jamie are doing with their organization called Crossfire Ministries.

By the way, if you're not familiar with Randy Shepherd or Jamie Johnson, let me tell you a little bit more about them. In 1993, they co-founded Crossfire Ministries. Crossfire is a sports evangelistic ministry that preaches the word of God through ministry programs and by meeting people where they are. Over 22,000 boys and girls have attended Crossfire summer camps throughout the years, and they have preached the gospel in 47 states and 68 countries worldwide since their founding back in 1993.

Randy and Jamie both gave their lives to the Lord at the tender age of nine. Randy received a college scholarship to play ball at UNC Asheville, and eventually pulled away from God with his lifestyle choices. However, it was an injury during his junior year of college that became a major turning point in his life, and that's when Randy decided to recommit his heart to Jesus Christ. Jamie went to Montreat College, where he was an academic all-American, playing both baseball and basketball. He was eventually inducted into their hall of fame. After that, he attended Gardner-Webb University where he played NCAA basketball.

Let's join our own Dr. Tim Clinton right now, and his special guests, Randy Shepherd and Jamie Johnson, in part two of their insightful conversation right here on Family Talk.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Welcome back to Family Talk, a division of the James Dobson Family Institute. What a delightful day yesterday, as Randy Shepherd and Jamie Johnson joined

us from Crossfire Ministries, fascinating conversation about how God is using sports and ministry together to bring the gospel to the lives of today's generations.

Hey, welcome back both of you. Such a fun day yesterday, but just a little bit again on Crossfire Ministries, what it means to you and what God's doing in and through your organization.

Jamie Johnson: Well, thank you, Tim. We get to use sport training on basketball to share Christ around the world, we even have softball, and our goal is to use that platform to get the attention of the audience, whether that's basketball camps in the summer for the boys and girls, teens, college future players, whether that is a church on a Sunday where we preach and have a cross for our weekend, or if that's the prisons like we're doing here in Memphis and sharing Christ to these inmates. It could be international, we go all over the world, 68 countries, we share Christ, play pro teams, all-star teams. It could be at a youth event, it could be schools, middle school, high school, universities. We speak for FCA Huddles. We go to these churches also and do youth rallies.

But the goal for us, Tim, as evangelists, is to use sports to encourage the church, obviously our brothers and sisters in Christ, but to reach the lost, and oftentimes we said in the first day program, you can reach people through sports and music that maybe won't come to church on Sunday. And if I were lost, I'd probably go to church either. So we use sports as the way to connect with them, their children, to get them out, their teens, or the parents who love the ACC all-star game that we have. They come out, they want to watch, they want to have a great time, pull for their favorite player, and then we give them the gospel.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's interesting, here we are in March Madness right now, headed towards the Final Four, and it's such an exciting time of the year. I love watching college basketball. What's interesting to me is when you're seeing all this on television, you go around town and you see all these kids showing up at the YMCA, or they're at their high school open gyms or what have you, and just wanting to play ball. I don't think I've ever seen a kid who doesn't want to walk onto a court and have success, you know that? Sports have become the heart of our culture, and I know we go too far with sports, we all get that, but kids want to have success on a field, on a court, whatever. You guys are in schools, high school gyms, hundreds of times a year. I wanted to ask you, what do you see in the eyes of the kids that are out there listening to you?

Randy Shepherd: When we're doing a high school assembly program at a school, Christian or secular school as well, or a student group, or even a Sunday morning preaching time to the youth Sunday, you see kids today I think, looking for answers, and they respect parameters. They want direction, they want parameters. So I think it's important that we give them parameters as adults, but as we talked about in the first program, that it'd be fun, something they enjoy. If you can get their

attention with something, then you can give them truth, which is going to change their lives.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And that principle, by the way, applies to anything. It doesn't have to be sports. We get that, Mom and dad, we understand kids are unique, they have varied interests and more, but we're just talking about a unique opportunity here where kids will often peel their hearts open and they're so receptive. They want to learn, they want skills, they want techniques, they want an opportunity to have a moment, if you will, with friends or what have you. Let's go a little bit further here, and Randy, I wanted to ask you, you had a moment where God just peeled you back. It was back in the early days of your career, and I think it was a defining moment for you that our audience really needs to hear about.

Randy Shepherd: Yes, Tim, it really was a defining moment. Jamie was playing for Gardner-Webb University, I was at UNC Asheville. I believe I was saved as a nine-year-old boy. I had walked with the Lord, but I let basketball become my god in high school and college. And had a bold believer, and we appreciate bold believers, like the Apostle Paul or like Peter, like the disciples, and he came up to me on campus at UNC Asheville one day, and he said, "Randy, how's your walk with Jesus going?" And I lied to him. I said, "It's going pretty good." I was going to church on Sunday, but I was looking at my watch at five minutes till 12 thinking, "When's he going to wrap this up, this message?" I had get home and play basketball. I wasn't really applying the messages to my life.

And then he asked me this question that came from an evangelism explosion question that he asked me. He said, "Randy, if you were to die today and stand before God, and he said, "Why should I let you into heaven?" what would you say to him?" I began to think about that, Tim. I knew the answer. I knew Jesus was the answer. I believe I'd made a decision at nine, but I wasn't walking with the Lord, and the Bible says you know a tree by the fruit it bears. Two days later, we're playing Gardner-Webb. God had a plan in this way back to middle school with Jamie, High School with Jamie, and then playing against him all those years. And he was on the team at Gardner-Webb, and I was a 90% free-throw shooter. We know as basketball guys that at the end of the game, they're going to foul you and try to get you to miss your free throws.

So I stepped into the huddle as the team captain, turned to walk toward half court and, bam, I got sucker punched right in the temple. Didn't see the punch coming, didn't get a chance to defend myself. Both benches cleared, several guys were fighting on the team. Jamie was a peacemaker, like the word of God. He was probably trying to break the fight up. But from that injury, I realized that basketball shouldn't be number one. Two days later, I got down on my knees in my dorm room and I said, "Lord, I don't know if I meant that at nine years old, but I mean it now. And I want to know that I know, as Dr. Adrian Rogers, used to say that you have a relationship with Jesus." And I nailed it down, and I said, "Lord, I want you to take my basketball, my studies, my relationships, my friendships, and I give it all to you." And it's amazing, Tim, from that, he gave me a burden for the lost.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Randy, when I listened to your story, I just couldn't help but think about our Ignite Men's Impact Weekend. It was in my heart that I just wanted my son, Zach, to know that there were men out there who played on the weekends, Saturday or Sunday, in a sport that he often, well, a sport that he loved, and that they actually loved the Lord, that they bowed their knee toward heaven. And it's been nothing but a joy to do this and to have people like you all come in and share the gospel. And what's interesting to me, Jamie, you guys use again sports as an entry point, a way to open up the heart of a young boy who may be closed, who may be frustrated, and you take and bring skills to the game. That's what it's all about. And what have you seen when you guys host a workshop or what have you, or when you're teaching them how to dribble a ball or maybe spin a ball on the finger or what have you, what starts happening in their hearts, Jamie?

Jamie Johnson: Well, you go by what you see, what you feel, what you sense, you did that with your son Zach, and he loved ball and you supported him in that. Well, when the kids come to camp, Tim, you're going to have a variety of boys and girls, black and white, red, yellow, brown. Some come from God-fearing homes, some come from broken homes, some have never met their father. And I had a great dad, Randy had a great dad, so we come from that standpoint of having a father that loved Christ. So when they come to that camp, they want affirmation, they want to know somebody cares, somebody loves them. So because we love basketball and we love Jesus, it's a great combination to pour into that boy that teenager's life. So sometimes you have the first day of camp, they're going to fist bump you, they'll smile, they might be shy, they might be outgoing, but, by the last day, usually you'll see these boys and girls, some that are older, teenagers, they're hugging you, they're smiling, they might even shed a tear because in that five-day camp or that four-day overnight experience, they found out how much God loves them, Christ died for them, and they see coaches, former athletes, and present athletes say, "You can do this. You can use your talent for the Lord."

So what do we see? We see life change. We see heart change. And then when we give them back to their parents, it's a win-win, because now what the parent was telling them, if they were Christian, we said it, same words, same text, same scripture, but because we said it, it's a different voice, it amplifies, it affirms what the mom and dads are teaching as Christians. And if they don't have Christian parents, we come in by the wind and the power of the Holy Spirit, and give them truth.

Dr. Tim Clinton: What's interesting to me is, I love that by the way, and Randy, I'm going to go back to you, God's given you some talent, you can do some crazy things with a basketball. You actually perform some unbelievable... You get everybody's attention right up front. And we want to shoot this on video, and I don't know if we're going to be able to post it up online or not, I hope so. Randy, just tell us a little bit about what you do, where it came from, and why it's such an entry point for people to open their hearts to the gospel.

Randy Shepherd:

When I was a young athlete, I couldn't jump like Jamie or MJ, and I wasn't that quick, but I was told at these camps I went to, North Carolina camp, Tennessee camp, Clemson Camp, Lake Forest Camp, as a young boy, "If you can handle this ball, there'll be a place for you on the team." And there was a great player that ties Dr. Dobson and I together, is Pistol Pete Maravich. And these drills came from Pistol Pete. I used to do about an hour's worth of ball handling drills in the kitchen floor every night, and in between these drills you get tired, and I didn't want to just put the ball down and do nothing, so I would do some different things with the ball that I'd seen guys do at camp. And mom and dad would come home, and I'd be spinning the ball like so, and they didn't think that was too strange. I was putting it on different fingers and moving it around and so forth.

And the next day, they came home, had a spoon out. And when we go to 68 countries, 47 states, Crossfire, preaching churches, student rallies, prisons, we tell folks, "This is how boys from Asheville, North Carolina eat ice cream." Not really, but a few of us. You get it going real good and then you eat your ice cream like so. And I like to say now, "Taste and see that the Lord is good. How do you taste the Lord? You repent of your sin. You give your life to Christ."

The next day, mom and dad came home, had a toothbrush out, and as I mentioned on the first program, Jamie and I have been blessed to go to Israel 23 times, and one of our favorite places there is called Golgotha, the place of the skull, and that's where a holy God represented by God's word, sinful world, we're all sinners, we've lied, we've cheated, we've had wrong thoughts, Jesus went to the cross and he bridged the gap between a holy God and a sinful world. He went to the grave.

And we tell young people he didn't stay in the grave like all the other religious leaders that are out there today. He came out of that grave, and just like this silly toothbrush is going to clean my teeth, Jesus Christ wants to clean our hearts up, and give us peace, and hope, and purpose. And then using a sports analogy, the Lord Jesus Christ is our head coach, God the Father, the last play the Lord Jesus Christ gave us... By the way, this is a flip phone. I can do it on an iPhone, but they're too expensive to mess up. The last play the Lord Jesus Christ gave us in Matthew 28:19, he said to, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I've commanded thee, and lo, I'm with you always, even into the ends of the earth."

So I took those Pistol Pete drills, turned them into using it for the gospel, and then, years ago, got to work the camps that Dr. Dobson had for Pistol Pete Maravich, single family parent camps, and did about six of those in Bangor, Maine, Houston, Texas, Dallas, Texas, Atlanta, Georgia, and that's where Doc and I first got to know each other through a guy named Gary Leitic that was with the program back then, that that worked the camps, and invited guys like me to come in and help out with the camp. So it was a Ministry of Dr. Dobson from 34 years ago.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

During that time there, as he was given the gospel presentation, what was amazing, if you can't see it online, he actually was spinning the basketball and placing it on a toothbrush on his phone, pretending like he was brushing his teeth, and kept the ball going. What's fascinating about that is every kid in the world wants to spin a basketball on his finger. Some celebrities, one in terms of basketball that everyone knows is Michael Jordan. Michael Jordan had this to say about Crossfire Ministries, "I support Crossfire basketball camps. I've watched Randy's career, respect his hard work toward the fundamentals of the game, I also appreciate the positive influence he has on young people and their lives by his example and daily living." That's a pretty amazing statement by Michael Jordan, you guys, I mean that's a testament again of, "The opportunity for influence."

Share a little bit more about what you're seeing, what's happening. You guys are doing stuff at the ACC tournament. You're all the way to the Final Four. You guys have been to the Olympics how many times? It's amazing, just because of a gift, of a skill committed to the gospel message.

Randy Shepherd:

I think, Tim, God had a plan all the way back. I was a 16-year-old young high school player. My best friend was 17, he beat me every day in the backyard in basketball. He was a McDonald's All American, and we went down to Dean Smith's North Carolina Tar Heel basketball camp, going to date ourselves now, summer of 1980, and I checked in my dorm room there and he was with me, and there were two African American guys in the room beside of us. One was 17, one was 16. We had an adjoining bathroom. I was scared. 400 campers there from North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, Georgia, and one of the African American guys knocks on the door. He comes through, he sticks his hand out. He said, "I want to introduce myself to you. My name is Mike Jordan." Well, he was 17 then, he became Michael Jordan, but we got on the same team that week and he made me look good. I tell young people, I was throwing the ball to him up around the rim and he was dunking at forwards and backwards, and we were giving each other high-fives, and that was a lot of fun.

We got on the same team that week and we won the camp championship, I tell young people, because of me, right? Wrong. Because of the guy that became MJ. But Michael and my high school teammate, Buzz Peterson, were McDonald's All Americans, and they decided they would go play at North Carolina. They were being recruited by everybody. Dean was a pretty smart recruiter, Smith that week, he put us in the suite together. I wasn't good enough to go to North Carolina, so I went to UNC Asheville, but through that connection, it's opened up a lot of doors to share around the world, and I knew MJ before he became MJ, he was just Mike Jordan then. I would go down and hang out with he and buzz in their dorm room. The next year, they won the national championship in 1982. Buzz now works for Michael for the Charlotte Hornets, his assistant GM. But through that connection, that friendship there, we've been able to plant seeds in Michael's life, he respects what we do. He gave us that endorsement. And we pray for him every day, because whether it's the greatest player, GOAT, in the world, or it's a wino on the corner, everybody

needs Jesus. And the Bible says, "What does it prophesy of a man if he gained the whole world and lose his soul?"

Dr. Tim Clinton: As you guys wrap up, and as we wrap up our program today, just talk to us about our kids. Talk to us about our relationships. Talk to us about what matters most. I know it's about that theme that Dr. Dobson always talks about, be there. That's about getting the gospel in their lives and earnestly praying that they would receive Christ. That's what it's all about, but pressing in, it's all anchored in our relationship, our connection with our kids, isn't it?

Randy Shepherd: Certainly is. And Jamie had a dad that was a pastor. Jamie's story is unbelievable, and I've heard it 1,000 times, but I love it. He threw a rock at a bird one time, trying to hit some quail that had gotten out of a cage, that his dad raised quail, and obviously the rock doesn't sale like a baseball, Jamie was nine years old. He missed the birds and he hit a Model T car behind him. And Dr. Ryan Earson comes out of the house and he says, "Jamie, you hit my car. I know you were throwing at those birds on the line, but I didn't see who threw the rock. Jamie, who threw the rock?" With Jamie being a young nine-year-old, scared to death, he said, "My friend did," who was eight years old. And Dr. Ryan Earson said, "Okay, guys, it's time to go home." And he probably called Dr. Johnson down the street and he said, "Dr. Johnson, your son just threw a rock, he hit my car. We can fix the car, but I'll let you fix the lie."

And Jamie's dad was so gracious as a pastor, probably like you, Tim, and a lot of the dads that are listening, he met him at the front door and he said, "Son, what have you been doing?" Jamie said, "Oh dad, I've been down the street just hanging out with my friend here." And he said, "Son, well actually it's more than that. You need to go up to the room and grab a belt, and wait on me on the bed till I get up there." And his dad showed up, and this is what was so powerful. Dr. Johnson had shared the gospel as a pastor with Jamie, Jamie had memorized scripture. As he, Jamie, would say, he looked like a Christian, he smelled like a Christian, but he had never made that commitment. And he wasn't trying to trick anybody, but here's what Dr. Johnson did. He said, "Jamie, hand me the belt." Dr. Johnson, 240, Lake Forest grad, pastor, served in the Korean War. He bent over the bed and he said, "Son, I want you to whip me on the back until I say stop."

Now, could you imagine as a nine-year-old boy, he said, "Son, I'm going to take your whipping for you. This is what Jesus did for you." Obviously, Jamie says he couldn't whip his dad. He dropped the belt. The gospel really came alive right then. He understood what Jesus did. As you just mentioned, we got to connect with our kids that Jesus took our whipping for our lies, for our disobedience, for our wrong thoughts, for our anger, and Dr. Johnson demonstrated that to Jamie as a nine-year-old boy, and that's when Jamie gave his life to Christ. And I've heard that 1,000 times, Tim, that story, when we go and share, we both give our testimonies, we give the gospel, and it touches me every time. So I wanted the people to hear that story about how Jamie's dad led him to the Lord. That ties right in with Dr. Dobson's heart of getting the gospel out, and explaining the

gospel to young people, whether they ever become a good athlete, a good musician, or anything, they need the gospel.

Dr. Tim Clinton: At the heart of all this is really the issue of love. What a delight, you guys. If people wanted to learn more about Crossfire Ministries, maybe they want to send their kid to a camp, or they might even want to invite you to come to their school or what have you, all those skills that you have, and that open entry point, where could they go? Where should they go?

Jamie Johnson: Tim, they can go to our website, which is crossfireministry.com. They can also write us by email. You can do that on the website, Tim. They can call our ministry at 828-255-9111, like calling for help. It's a cell phone, so you can even text the ministry and tell us about what you're reaching out to us for, and then we'll get back with you, and talk about what you're trying to do for your outreach in your community, and how you want to share Christ. We can help you with that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Randy, I wanted any closing words. And again, I know you shared that journey you're on and we're going to pray for you. And I know also you're taking care of your mom. You've got some things going on there with mom. Maybe just close us out and let us know how we can pray for you, your mom, and the ministry.

Randy Shepherd: Sure. Jamie has an 85-year-old mom. We're both single. We're praying for God's will in our lives, and Paul said, you could get more done single. He sent us out by twos too, we're open for marriage like you guys have experienced, but it's in God's timing. But I do covet the prayers for my mom, for my health situation, and we just don't like to play basketball. We love to preach. We have a message. We can come to your church and challenge your church on soul-winning and witnessing. Billy Graham told us these statistics himself, as I close, one of them, he believed that 60% of those in churches around the world this Sunday are church gens, they've not truly been born again by the spirit of God. And as evangelists, we've found that.

And, number two, he believed that 95% of us that truly know the Lord will never lead a soul to Christ, and we want to challenge other believers, whatever field you're in, to share your faith, to learn to share the gospel, to do it with a smile, to do it with encouragement, but how they going to hear without a preacher? And that doesn't mean a preacher like Jamie's daddy, but that means a truth-teller, and whatever field you're in, God wants us to be truth-tellers and pray for those opportunities daily to plant a seed with the gospel, to give the whole gospel, to draw the net at a table at a restaurant, like last night, Jamie was able to do, and lead our waiter to the Lord at a restaurant. So wherever it is, keep sharing the gospel. That's the hope for the future.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Speaking of Billy Graham, he said this, "A coach will impact more people in one year than the average person will in an entire lifetime." That's a big influence. That's a big responsibility. Hey, what a wonderful ministry you guys have. So delighted to have had these two days just to learn more about your personal

life, your walk with Christ, and what God's doing through Crossfire Ministries. On behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, the entire team here again, we salute you all, pray that God would continue to strengthen your heart, and that you'd be bold, and strong, and courageous, and impact today's generations for such a time as this. Thank you both for joining me.

Randy Shepherd: Tell Dr. J we said hello.

Jamie Johnson: That's right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I love that. Dr. J himself, Dr. James Dobson. Thank you guys for joining us. Bless you.

Roger Marsh: You're listening to Family Talk, and that was the conclusion of this two-part conversation featuring Randy Shepherd and Jamie Johnson of Crossfire Ministries.

By the way, if you'd like to listen to today's or yesterday's broadcast again in its entirety, you can access both programs on our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

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Well, friend, you've been listening to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Hope you have a great weekend, and may God continue to richly bless you and your family. Join us again Monday for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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