



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Elevate Your Faith in God and Find Real Joy in Your Life

Guest(s): Margaret Feinberg

Air Date: June 22, 2022

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Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener-supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Welcome into Family Talk, a broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host. I also serve as president of the American Association of Christian Counselors. I'm a licensed professional counselor, marriage and family therapist, honored to serve here with our team at JDPI. Thank you for spending your day with us.

Well, we're currently in Pensacola, Florida at the Extraordinary Women Conference. Just a few hundred feet away, there's a sold out event, packed full of energetic women from all walks of life, denominations worshipping God and being encouraged by amazing godly women speakers. It's all happening at the Marcus Point Baptist Church, again, here in Pensacola, Florida. I have with me now one of the speakers for the weekend. She's a wonderful friend. She is the host of the popular podcast, *The Joycast* by Margaret Feinberg. She's a popular Bible teacher and speaker at churches and events such as Extraordinary Women. She's also creator of the best-selling coloring and creative books for grownups. Her books include *Scouting the Divine*, *Fight Back with Joy*, *Taste and See: Discovering God among Butchers, Bakers, and Fresh Food Makers*, and the corresponding Bible studies. I think they've sold like a million copies or more, received critical acclaim and extensive national media coverage from *CNN*, the *Associated Press*, *USA Today*, *LA Times*, *Washington Post* and more.

She was named one of the 50 women most shaping culture and the church today by *Christianity Today*. Margaret lives in Utah with her husband Leif, they have a sweet dog, Zoom. He's in here. I'm looking at him right now. She believes some of the best days are best spent around the table with amazing food and friends. Margaret, thank you for joining us.

Margaret Feinberg: What a joy to be here. Thank you so much, Tim.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Margaret, you're out there. People love to hear you speak. God's given you a unique voice, but what are you seeing out there on the front lines? What are you seeing in the eyes of women in particular?

Margaret Feinberg: You know, it's interesting as I look, I was also reading an article recently and I don't think we realize, I think sometimes we think that just because you win the battle that the war is over. And so I think that in many areas where we have seen progress and breakthrough in our nation and around the world, it's not over, it's just not over. And I was recently reading where people are going to work and they're often finding that they're making just thousands of micro-decisions every single day. And it is exhausting. I mean, every person that you're coming to interact, if you're coming back into the workplace or somebody new comes in, for so many, they've only encountered them maybe once on Zoom or a bunch of times on Zoom, and never in person.

You've got people who are stepping into offices who have never met. You're not sure if you fist bump, if you handshake, if you hug. Based on their experiences, their backgrounds, you've got a variety of political views and all of that. We are making, not even consciously, subconsciously thousands and thousands of micro-decisions and you don't really even sense are going on. You just do, at the end of the day, you don't want to go grab an app with your friends. You want to go home and probably stare at television screen or just check out.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Close the door.

Margaret Feinberg: Yeah. And so, when I go to events, I see women who are just, they're exhausted. They are maxed out. This is taken a severe toll on us emotionally, mentally, physically, spiritually. And so the hunger is for encouragement. It is not just, I say that as a nice, like, aw, sweet, you are encouraged. But to impart courage, living, breathing, courage that I believe is found in the person of Jesus Christ, that there is such a hunger and such a thirst that when you come with that truth and that beauty that is empowering because of the power of Christ, I think there's a greater level of breakthrough. I think there's a greater level of freedom. I think we're seeing people turn to Christ because they realize what they had and what they knew just simply is not working.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Margaret, I wanted to maybe endear the listeners a little bit more to you, your story. Any particular themes or things that really shaped the heart that's inside of you?

Margaret Feinberg: I was raised a little bit unusual by a Jewish father who came to believe the Messiah and a Gentile mother who eventually came to believe in Jesus as well. And so I kind of grew up in this Christian home with hues of Judaism. And that really gave me just a deep appreciation for the cultural background of Scripture and just kind how I read the Bible and think about it. But I was also raised by parents who were just as free-spirited as they came, and so even though I was born in Melbourne, Florida, and my dad was at one point manufacturing surfboards. I grew up running around a little mom and pop Cocoa Beach surf shop that they started. I remember about eight, we moved to Maggie Valley, North Carolina, and they built a bomb shelter and we were completely off the grid long before any of this stuff is cool now. And kind of did that lifestyle for five years.

And one day they woke up and said, let's go skiing for real. And so we hopped in our rusty little old Subaru and drove to Colorado and they became ski patrol and ski instructors. And so it was this adventure. It was this curiosity, this sense that there must be more to life. And I think that was a gift. As a child, obviously, you're trying to put down roots, have stability. That was probably not so much part of the story, but I look today at how it makes me just so curious, so want to experience, try new things, life and of relationships. And where we live in Utah, it's not uncommon for us to have people over, four or five or more nights a week. We love people. That, to us, is life.

Dr. Tim Clinton: There's a man in the building here. He came with you. He's pretty tall. Interesting story about how you met Leif. Do you mind sharing some of that?

Margaret Feinberg: Yeah. My aunt had a bed and breakfast in Alaska and my uncle went out scuba diving one morning and he came to the surface and he was dead and it just turned my aunt's world upside down. And so she needed help with her bed and breakfast in Alaska. And I went up for a couple summers and I ran into this guy. I was signing books at a little church cafe, and I didn't really notice him, but he noticed me and he just kept getting to know me. And we spent time together. And after knowing him for just maybe four or five weeks, it was time for me to go back to my home state in Colorado. And before I did, I remember he sat me down and he looked me in the eye and he said, "Would you be willing to move to Alaska to pursue a relationship to become my wife?" And I was like, "No way, dude. I'm not moving to Alaska for a boy." And he kept calling and pursuing. And a few months later, my mom met him. And after we shared a meal together, she looked at me and she goes, "Margaret, this guy is amazing. And you're a fool if you don't give this relationship a chance." And so I packed up, I moved to Alaska and 10 months later, I married the love of my life.

Dr. Tim Clinton: As the story would go, here's a new ministry couple, started out pretty glamorous, fun, engaging. But as life has its twists and turns, your story began to unravel a little bit. And in the midst of writing and speaking, it was a personal journey for you and then for Leif too. And God began to turn things. Do you mind just taking us down that road?

Margaret Feinberg: Yeah, I was in my thirties when I was diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer. And those of you who have faced cancer, you know that often the younger that you are when you're diagnosed often, the more difficult it can be, just the way that cancer works. And if you're older and you've got kind of a worn down immune system, it's not hard for like a couple of cancer cells to go rogue. But when you're young, at least in this kind of cancer, they have to be pretty feisty cancer cells. They're going to try to cruise down that highway as quick as they can. And so it did not look good. And so here I am with Leif, this incredible man, just trying to make sense of life when you're just thrust into so many doctor's appointments, the kind of decisions where it's like, what body part are we going to cut off today?

That was dark. It was so dark. But I remember in the middle of that, I was just struggling. There's just so much and I sensed the Holy Spirit say to me, "Margaret, you can either cling to the crisis or you can cling to Christ, but you do not have arms big enough for both." And I knew I was like, Christ, I want to cling to you. I know this crisis has taken up so much space in my life, but I want to cling to you. In a very practical way, Leif and I just thought, man, a verse in Jeremiah, that God has a hope and a future for us. I thought, man, I got to do something that's outside this crisis that kind of makes a personal declaration that this will not define me, that this is not the central most thing in our lives.

And so, we just started doing, just again, playing and going, okay, what would give us life? And I was so sick. I remember my husband went down and he got a couple gallons of paint and painted the living room. And all of a sudden, we had something to talk to our friends about other than the disease. And he decided, he is a wackadoodle who I love beyond belief. And he said, "A thing I've always wanted to do is go swim Alcatraz." So he went out and started training and it was so fun because now, instead of, you all probably know this, but like when people go through tragedies or ongoing suffering, everybody just asks about that and they forget that you're a person. And it's exhausting, because it's really the last thing you want to talk about for so many of us. And suddenly we had things like new paint and a fresh living room and training for a crazy swim and he did it and he stayed alive. I was real proud of him.

Dr. Tim Clinton: In the midst of that too, Leif no doubt had some sleepless nights, ministry change, began wondering about calling. What does God have for us? Whether or not this is kind of the end of the road. You hear people say, trust Christ, have faith. God's good. And it's like, this isn't good. How did you make your way through that?

Margaret Feinberg: Yeah. I reached a place in my own spiritual journey where I just got so beat down so discouraged. Those days when you can hardly get out of bed in the morning. And I ached inside. And I remember one day a friend of ours, we having lunch and he looked at me and he said, "Margaret, I don't know when and where it happened, but somewhere along the way, you have made agreements with the universe that are not true." And at first, I remember, I recoiled, I thought, "Agreements with the universe. That sounds woo woo." And he went on to explain how he once saw me move through life and ministry with this hope and this optimism. It's like, it had just eroded. And now it was like I was living my life as if the other shoe was about to drop.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's the tough place to be. Because if you are anticipating, it means your mind is there, not in the free place, it's in the dark place. How do you train your mind? How do you dig out of that kind of a ditch?

Margaret Feinberg: Yeah. I started actually going through the Scripture and looking for passages that really spoke to the truth. There is that difference. We believe things that are untrue. We will start behaving in self-destructive, we will start thinking in self-destructive ways, that everything's just going to get worse. It's not going to

get better. Uh-oh, something bad's going to happen. And even when we're given great joys and celebration, that we just kind of shove that to the side and allowed those darker thoughts to take up space. And so, I started going through the Scripture and just looking up for the Scriptures that kind of combated the lies that I was believing. And I carved out just 90 seconds a day to say them out loud. And it actually became the foundation for a book called *More Power To You: Declarations to Break Free from Fear and Take Your Life Back* because we are in this battle for our minds. And we think, oh, well that's just religious language or that's just psychological language. And the truth is, that is the real reality.

Dr. Tim Clinton: There isn't much else to hold onto.

Margaret Feinberg: No, because how you think is how you will go. That scripture, I started waking up and just saying, every day, "Jesus is king of my life. I am who Christ says I am." I take every thought captive. I break every...

Dr. Tim Clinton: Not a Pollyannish way. No, no, no, no. This was like, I don't have anything else.

Margaret Feinberg: Yeah. This is like defiant. This is pure defiance. And because when I say those out loud, I'm not just rewiring my brain. So my thoughts are not just going to the negative thoughts, but I'm actually having some neurological shifts that are taking place. But I'm also saying them out loud to God, confessing my allegiance to him and his kingdom. And I am looking at the enemy and saying six feet back. This brain, I'm going to fight with everything that I have.

Dr. Tim Clinton: What did you learn, Margaret, about faith? A lot of people say you got to have faith. But what did you learn about faith? I'm going to ask you about faith. I want to ask you about hope and I want to ask you about love. What did you learn about faith?

Margaret Feinberg: Anybody who sells you a bill of goods that says that faith will come without service, sacrifice, and suffering is lying to you. That the walk of faith, I is not unlike that of Jesus, that we can all expect to be called to great service, to make great sacrifice, and to endure some suffering. And so when you know that, as one of my friends said to me in the midst of cancer, he said, "If you have a good Christology, it will carry you through." In other words, if you understand the ways, the life, the teachings, the miracles, and the suffering of Christ, and the great hope, that, you can put your faith in so that it's not, how are my circumstances? How did this not pan out? I really hoped for this. This was this huge, humongous disappointment. It is this sense that Christ alone will carry you through, but you don't do it alone. He is with you.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Margaret, you just came off stage, packed out event here in Pensacola, Extraordinary Women Conference, all women. And you know as well as I do, when you looked around that crowd, there were some pretty heavy eyes. Women carrying a lot of pain. Some of them searching, some of them angry,

some of them desperate and wanting hope so bad, asking God for a miracle. What'd you tell them?

Margaret Feinberg: You know-

Dr. Tim Clinton: You've been there.

Margaret Feinberg: I've been there. I've been there. And some days it is just one day at a time. It is not grandiose. It is not sparkly. Sometimes you get 10,000 points if you keep breathing today. You get 10,000 points, if you're able to get out of bed today. You get 20,000, if you can take a shower and you're a mom. But I think it's day by day, it's one day at a time and hanging your hope on the idea that Jesus will prevail. He may not do it in the time you want, or the timetable you want or the way that you want, but even behind it all, God still remains.

I remember a number of years ago, I was also in a difficult place and we'd just been embezzled. Everything was just falling apart. And I remember I was so beat down that I just wept until I fell down on my kitchen floor. And I remember I lifted my hands above my head as I'm laying there, it sounds silly, almost like I was doing snow angels on the kitchen floor amidst all the grime and the sticky. And there was kind of this prayer that just came out of my heart and I didn't write it. I didn't plan for it. But it was simply this, "God is good. God is on the throne. Breathe in, breathe out. God is good. God is on the throne. Breathe in, breathe out."

And so, for anyone listening today, and you're in that place where you are just so beat down, you can't even process, you take a breath and it doesn't feel like it fills your lungs. Lay down on the floor, if you can, but just say those words. "God is good. God is on the throne. Breathe in, breathe out" as a defiant act of trust, defiant act of faith, and defiant act of love.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's even like with kids. Kids aren't afraid of the dark, they're afraid of being alone in the dark. And when it gets dark as adults, we want to know God's there. That He's with us. I sense that's what you were reminding yourself, that He's there. And then you want to believe that He's good. My son, Zach, has talked about friends for the fire and the whole issue. Margaret, what did you learn about love and connectedness and all this and how does it play?

Margaret Feinberg: Yeah. I think we are not fashioned to do this life alone. We are meant for relationship. But I know some people are introverts or they prefer more quiet or more alone time, and I get that. But at the end of the day, and I think that's one of the things we've seen throughout the pandemic is like, there's only so much that a Zoom call will take you, that we are meant to be with other people. And that through that, God works. He reveals Himself. He encourages, and it's not just you being the receiver. Sometimes you're the giver and you don't even realize that it's happening. But there are true fire friends, and when the fire comes, those relationships are going to loosen bonds. They're going to burn

away and that's okay. It hurts. I get it. It's not the ones that you think it will be. It never is.

But in that, it's almost like a land burning where just all the brush is gone. And we never think that new life will come there. I know that there was a fire near our house last summer that thousands were evacuated. And when it was done, the whole hillside was completely black. But you know what, a few months later you saw all the poking through of the green and the life and the new light.

Dr. Tim Clinton: He makes all things new. Somewhere along the way, we moved to another chapter because He's the author. In Christianity, a lot of people think about saving grace, that when they accept Christ life, they expect it to be different. And I think a little further down the road, they learn about sustaining grace, that He helps us. He doesn't necessarily save us from the fire, but He's with us in the fire. And that's an important mental shift, isn't it?

Margaret Feinberg: It's profound. It's real. I think there is this sense. My husband and I have encountered quite the variety of hardships, whether it's being embezzled, whether it's a battle with cancer, whether it's various health issues, living in chronic pain. I can stack pretty high on those. And yet what I'm becoming more convinced, is that through it all, it's almost like the stuff is being so kicked out of me, it's like, it can almost start smelling even more like the fragrance of Christ.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Wow.

Margaret Feinberg: And so, if we receive it, suffering, it is a severe mercy.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Margaret, you're such a gift in the way you think and process and how you have embraced Christ. If someone listening today is just saying, listen, I've tried. I want that kind of faith. I want to believe that. But they're like Thomas, not until I see the nail prints in his hand will I believe. How do you encourage them? How do you give them hope when it's like, man, I'm just lost and I'm asking God help everything to stop or to help us, pull us through. God, do something right now.

Margaret Feinberg: Couple things first, as far as that doubt, faith is not the absence of doubt. We all have doubts. We all have fears. That is normal. That is human. And yet, I think that in the midst of that pain and in that loss, and when that moment hits that you just, you can't take another step. I would encourage you to be still. Be still. Take a breath, drink in the harsh, sometimes hard and beautiful reality that He is God and you are not. And He is at work. He has not fallen asleep behind the wheel. He has not dozed off. He knows exactly who you are. He knows every single hair on your head and our God is a provider and He is a sustainer. And that provision and that sustaining may not come in the way that you want and the package that you like, but remain suspicious that God is up to something good.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Psalm 46 is one of my favorite passages. Verse one says, "Elohim, God is our refuge in our strength." He's a present help, active help during times of trouble, when things aren't the way they're supposed to be. Therefore, we won't fear. And you're right. You go down to verse 10 and it means to be still and know that I am God. He is in the midst of it all. Margaret, such a delight to have you. If people want to go deeper, they want to walk with Margaret Feinberg, learn more about her Bible studies and this journey of faith that you're on, where could they go?

Margaret Feinberg: One of the great places is Instagram or Facebook under the name mafeinberg, and also my website at margaretfeinberg.com. I tell all kinds of stories, video clips, just fun things just to enjoy, enjoy this incredible relationship that God invites us into.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Margaret, on behalf of Dr. Dobson, the entire team at Family Talk, his wife, Shirley and more, we just tip the hat to you. Love the work that we see in and through you for such a time as this. Thank you for joining us.

Margaret Feinberg: Thank you.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Margaret Feinberg is an incredible woman of God. She lays it all out there and I like that about her. Perhaps you're struggling with your faith these days and need a little boost of encouragement to reclaim the joy that God's intended for you. I think you'll find Margaret's writings and ministry to be very encouraging. You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton co-host here at Family Talk. To learn more about Margaret or hear any part of today's program that you might have missed, just go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk or call us toll free at (877) 732-6825. Now, if you're in need of prayer today, I'd like to invite you to call us with your request. Our team members are standing by 24/7 to take your call. Our number again, toll free (877)732-6825.

Now, before we go, right now is a perfect time to give to the James Dobson Family Institute. Thanks to the generosity of some friends of the ministry, we've been given a matching grant of \$300,000 just for the month of June. That means your gift of any amount to the Dobson Family Institute or Family Talk this month will be doubled until we hit our goal. To give today, visit drjamesdobson.org or call (877) 732-6825.

Well thank you for listening to Family Talk and for your support. We wouldn't exist if it wasn't for our faithful listeners, people just like you. And thank you. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Please join us again next time. God's richest blessings to you all.

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