



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Rise Up: The Dalton Risner Story – Part 1

Guest(s): Dalton Risner

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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.
- Roger Marsh: At six feet, five inches tall and weighing 300 plus pounds, there's a reason Denver Bronco's offensive lineman, Dalton Risner, is called Moose. I'm Roger Marsh. Dr. Tim Clinton recently sat down with Dalton to discuss his upbringing, his career, and most importantly, his faith. To introduce his guest, here is Family Talk's co-host and the President of the American Association of Christian Counselors, Dr. Tim Clinton.
- Dr. Tim Clinton: Far more than just a professional football player, Dalton Risner, third-year offensive lineman for the Denver Broncos has always had a passion for helping others and spreading the love of Christ. Despite playing for a small high school, Risner received a football scholarship to Kansas State, where he started 50 out of 51 games in his college career at a Big 12 school, elevating his game against some of the best collegiates in the nation. He grew to understand a sport that would become his profession under legendary Kansas State head football coach, Bill Snyder. Moose, as he is known to his friends and teammates, culminated his senior year by being voted Big 12 Offensive Lineman of the Year. He was also awarded the following: 2018 First Team All American, 2018 Big 12 Offensive Lineman of the Year, 2018 First Team All-Big 12, 2018 Campbell Trophy finalist, 2018 Jason Whitten Collegiate Man of the Year finalist, and 2018 Lombardi Award finalist.
- Dalton was drafted in the second round of the 2019 *NFL* draft. Dalton is, by his own admission, more proud of his work off the field. This young man embraced the front range like no one they've ever seen around these parts in a long, long time. He's active through Special Olympics, the Big Brothers/ Big Sisters program, and his own foundation, RisnerUp. Dalton is a devout follower of Christ and he lives to use his gifts to be a faithful steward of God's grace. He truly practices 1 Peter 4:10, which says "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. "What beautiful verse. It's a pleasure to welcome Dalton Risner.

Dalton Risner: Hey, thank you so much. It's so great to meet you. Really appreciate Dr. Dobson and his ministry over the years, for sure.

Dr. Tim Clinton: As we get started, Dalton, probably going to be one of my easiest and probably one of those ones that I like the best. I just couldn't wait to get my hands on this interview and say, "Let's go."

Dalton Risner: Man, that means so much to me. I've been so excited about this as well. I've never been able to meet such a group of people that are so kind and forward about talking about God and just meeting you guys for the first time and opening up in prayer. That's what it's all about, man, so I'm just as honored to be on here, my friend.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Dalton, in-season interviewing of this nature's pretty rare. I don't think a lot of people realize how much work and preparation goes into preparing to play on Sundays in the *NFL*. Tell us a little bit about what's your average week like, what does it involve?

Dalton Risner: Not a lot of people remember how busy we can be, but I can walk you through it, man. We get extremely busy and I know you're familiar with it, but we play the game on Sunday. So Sunday, you're really not on your phone. That's a full day for just football, focusing on the game. Win or loss, you're coming home. Usually as an offensive lineman, you're pretty beat up so there's a lot of ice involved, getting to bed early. You wake up Monday and you got to be back at the facility. You got to be ready to go to treatment. You got to be able to go over all the film. You got to get a lift in, watch the film with your coaches and get in treatment and rehab. And then I went straight from there and Tuesdays are more of a community day for me. How can I give back in the community, give back to the world and glorify Jesus?

1 Peter 4:10, each of us have been giving us a gift. And how can we use that gift to be faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms? And that's what Tuesday's about for me is 1 Peter 4:10. So I just got back from a Special Olympic Unified Champion School, which is where kids at the school interact with Special Olympic athletes. And by Special Olympic athletes, I mean, kids or adults that have intellectual disabilities and they played basketball games. So I was there and I gave a big speech and talked about Jesus and prayed. And then Wednesday and Thursday are our full pad days. So those days we go hard and we go six to six. Friday is a little bit lighter day, kind of getting towards the game. We get off around 12:00 or 1:00. And you have the rest of the afternoon to kind of kick back and relax, take care of the to-do list.

If you got a house, take care of the house, call family, call friends. Saturday kind of gets more into that locked-in mode. So you're back to the facility for half a day and you got to go to the hotel that night. So I could go a lot more in detail, but that's a normal week. There's very little time to take a breath. That's why off-season is so big to really clear the head and the mind and the body.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I want to go to some of the backwater story that led to where you're at in this big world of the *NFL* now. But it all started in a Small Town USA, Wiggins, Colorado, I think, Dalton, you grew up on a ranch. I bet that was fun at the dinner table at night. How about it?

Dalton Risner: It was amazing, man. Like having the four brothers in my life, five of us boys, I can't begin to tell you how much I admire my mother. She had five boys, she raised all of us and my dad. They had kids at 18, they were married, but they had kids very early and they had to work three jobs and we got Christmas presents dropped off our doorstep. Some my family is by no means perfect, no one is, but we are close and we love each other so much. And my brothers and my family, at one point in my life, were the only people that believed in me. Nights at the dinner table, one thing popped up in my head. Mom and Dad always made me drink a glass of milk. And I had to plug my nose and drink it. I hated it so much. It usually was warm by the time I drank it because I didn't want to. Come to find out I'm lactose intolerant, so maybe that's why I didn't enjoy milk so much.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I saw where you guys, did you raise cows, crops? It says you were wrangling cattle growing up.

Dalton Risner: Well, so we were raised in a very rural community. Wiggins, Colorado has 800 people. And one thing my parents did an extremely good job of, two things they did really good at, one, they introduced us to who Jesus Christ was at a very early age and they didn't force anything on us. They just told us about Jesus. They said they believed in it. And they wanted us to believe in something bigger than ourselves, down here on earth. That was the most important thing my parents did. But the second most important thing, when they didn't have much money and they made ends meet, they didn't spend money on themselves. They didn't really take care of themselves. They took care of us five boys, and they've done that their whole life. They let each and every one of us have our own ambitions and our own dreams. And they gave us every opportunity to accomplish them.

My dad, at an early age told me, "Dalton," he told all of us boys this, "What do you want to do? Who do you want to be, and I will make it happen. I'll give you every opportunity. I'm going to push you. You're not going to like me at times. I'm going to push you so you can accomplish anything you want." So at one point in my life, I wanted to be a bull rider. So I had cattle. I was the boy in the family... None of my other brothers were as interested in this. We never cropped, we never farmed. I'd call ourselves ranchers.

We had cattle, we had pigs, we had horses. I went to rodeos and I bull rode, and I wanted to be Lane Frost. The movie, *Eight Seconds* is one of my favorite movies. I'm just so thankful my parents allowed us to all have our own ambitions. And like you said, we did have cattle, pigs. Was my dad interested in that? No, he's a businessman. My dad sells computer software, but he made all

that possible for me and my four brothers. And my mom was there at every event. Took us to everything, fed us boys. Yeah, it was pretty special.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Wiggins High School, 1A. This is important. 1A school about 38 students per grade. I think I'm getting that right, Dalton. That's where you played high school football. You earned the nickname, Moose. How big are you? I want people to hear. This kid coming through high school, lineman. I mean, he's something else.

Dalton Risner: I am six, five, 320 pounds. In high school, at one point my senior year, I believe I was six, four, 320 pounds. It's fluctuated, but I'm at right about six, five. And you nailed it. I had about 35 to 38 kids in each grade. I think there was 200 kids in our high school. 800 people in our whole entire town. And everyone waved. You knew everybody. And that's what's so special about my journey and where I'm at today, is where I came from.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yes.

Dalton Risner: And no one had ever went to go play Division One football and no one had ever went to the *NFL*. And I have to credit so much of that back to Jesus, because one, you don't work hard to be six foot five, 320 pounds. And we forget that as professional athletes. We work so hard and we dedicate our lives to a sport. And we forget that we had so much help to be there because there's a lot of men and women in this world that just weren't blessed with size or talent to be able to do what we do. And yes, I worked hard to be where I'm at, but without Jesus blessing me with this, I wouldn't be where I'm at. Without parents that took me to camps, I went to 20 camps a summer and coming from a 1A school to get a full ride scholarship, to Division One program, there was a lot of help to make that happen and makes it so much more special looking about where I come from, a town that barely has a grocery store, no stoplights, maybe a gas station, if you want to call it that. So very, very fortunate to say, I'm from Wiggins, Colorado. I

Dr. Tim Clinton: I learned that there's a restaurant there in Wiggins called Fajitas and that your mom and dad had an open tab so that all the boys could go there and just chow. I can't imagine how much food you guys went through.

Dalton Risner: Oh, you're talking my language now, man. You know about Fajitas in Wiggins, Colorado. We're going to be good friends. If you ever make a visit, I'll take you to Fajitas. And just a wonderful family, man. They live in Mexico four months out of the year and they were Wiggins the other eight months. And they leave during the winter, but it was that one restaurant. So after school, if we wanted a snack or if we wanted to go eat there before a game or after a game with our friends, think about five boys. You got a Peewee football player, you got a JV basketball player, you got a couple varsity brothers. We were doing so many different things at so many different times. Mom and Dad had the guts to open up a tab and there had to be some boundaries set on that tab after a few weeks, I can promise you that because we thought it was pretty cool.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I bet.

Dalton Risner: We started telling our friends at school we had a tab and we'd take care of them. And we got in trouble a few times for some of the bills, but we learned to do it the right way and chow down.

Dr. Tim Clinton: One of my favorite portraits is an FCA, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, portrait and the title of it's called "Influence." And when you look at it, you see a young boy with a football, and he's looking on a crowd of older boys who are playing the game, Dalton. And I was thinking about you growing up, Small Town USA. And I love your story here, but I think about that word influence. Who was it? I know your dad was your high school football coach, I think. Who really spoke in to your life? Who do you think really shaped your character the most? You certainly referenced your brothers.

Dalton Risner: When I look back at who molded me, it really truly does start as a kid. I had two parents, they both took different roles. My mother took the role of, "I don't care what you do in life, I want you to be kind to people. I want you to love people. I don't want you to judge people. And who you are as a person is all that matters, you could be the most popular man in the world and go to the *NFL*, but all that matters, I want you to treat people well." And that was awesome for my mom. She molded me in that way. And she lived that in her life as well. My father was the role of "Whatever you choose to do in life, give everything you got." He showed us so much working three jobs, and we had no money and giving up his college football career for us boys.

He works hard at everything he does. There is no stop. That's the standard that my good dad set is that when you have something, an opportunity, you work hard for it. So between those two, they are just two of the best parents I could ever ask for. Getting to college, there's a man by the name of Morgan Burns. Morgan Burns lived in the dorms for five years. We all know in college, dorms are not the most fun. They're fun for one year when you first get there. And one day I asked Morgan, I said, why are you in the dorms? It's your fifth year? He said, well, a lot of people come in and they're freshmen and they lose themselves their first year. They get away from Jesus and they get away from their mom and dad and they make decisions that don't represent who they are. So I've stayed in here every year because I want to guide you guys. I want you guys to know Jesus more and I want to be a role model.

Morgan, as you can imagine, quickly became a huge positive influence in my life. Morgan not only was a great man of God, but Morgan Burns was an extremely good football player at Kansas State. Turns out his fifth year when he's leaving, he ends up getting a shot at the *NFL*. Morgan goes to rookie mini camp. He wasn't drafted. When you show up to rookie mini camp as an undrafted guy, you pretty much have a 0.01% chance of being in the *NFL*. We keep maybe one guy every year from rookie mini camp, if you're not drafted. Morgan Burns was that one guy for the Tennessee Titans. And Morgan Burns, I think to this day, is still the quickest football player to ever retire.

Morgan Burns got a contract offered to him from the Tennessee Titans to be on their 90-man roster to inter camp. And he said, "Coach, I just wanted to prove to myself that I could do it. I didn't want to tell myself the rest of my life that I didn't even try. But my calling in life is not to be a football player, it's be a missionary and a man for God. And this is not what God wants me to do right now." So just that story alone, he shaped me so much with his relationship with Jesus Christ and my relationship as I've grown with Jesus has also just flourished and continued to grow, to make me who I am today and have the character that I have as well.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I love that story, Dalton, because everybody needs somebody-

Dalton Risner: Yep.

Dr. Tim Clinton: In their everyday life to influence their trajectory. And if you don't have somebody, I can imagine every parent saying, "Boy, I will wish Morgan would show up in my son or daughter's life." We need to pray constantly that God would bring into our lives people who would influence our outcomes. Let's keep going here, Dalton. It's amazing. From Wiggins High School, you wind up at Kansas State University, the Wildcats. I'd looked at some of your pedigree there. It's unbelievable, the awards, et cetera. But Coach Bill Snyder, legend in his own right, had a real influence in your life. Tell us about your years there and what happened and how God used it. And we're going to talk a little bit more about your foundation and how that all got started at Kansas State University.

Dalton Risner: Yeah. Well, I'll start with Coach Snyder. Coach Snyder was one of those coaches that for five years, you don't really enjoy. And what I mean by that is, he made me very uncomfortable for five years, very uncomfortable. Old school, blue collar coach, a lot like my dad and how much he wanted out of guys, and he pushed me. High school, I didn't go against anybody my size, it was easy. When I got to college, Dalton Risner wasn't the man anymore. He wasn't the hometown hero. He wasn't the strongest, wasn't the biggest. He wasn't the fastest. I got tested a lot and I wanted to be done. I'll always remember, I called my dad and I said, I was done, two weeks into being at Kansas State. Coach Snyder was hardcore.

And my dad, always remember, he looked at me and he said, "So you're done." I said, "Yes. He said, "Where are you going?" I said, "I'm coming home." He said, "What home?" I said, "Your home." He's like, "Oh no, you're not." He's like, "You're not coming home." He's like, "If you're done here, you're not coming home." Some people might look at that as very harsh. Okay, that's fair. But you know what? I look at that as I look at that as single-handedly, the most important thing my dad ever did for me is telling me I couldn't come home. He didn't give me an out. He taught me everything he'd been telling me about ever since he was a kid. You work hard for something, you don't give up. And you know, you look back to the Bible and it talks about the wise man that built his house on a rock and the foolish man that built his house on the sand.

You're going to get hit with a storm. And my dad built that foundation in me to where I built my house on the rock. If I would've quit right then and there, my house would've been built out of sand the rest of my life. I truly believe that. And I wouldn't be where I'm at today. So with that story, Bill Snyder just made me very uncomfortable. And my fifth year, my final year, I was a three-year captain, a four-year starter, Bill Snyder had never told me he was proud of me. To be honest, he had always, never really had anything good to say. And he looked at me on the senior night and he told me that I was one of the best players he's ever coached. One of the most high character players he's ever coached. And he told me he was proud of me.

And that meant so much because he wasn't a coach that gave that to you. He was a coach that made you earn it. So he molded me in so many ways. He made me go from a boy to a man, plain and simple. But now that I'm in the *NFL*, it's hard, don't get me wrong. But the things I did at Kansas State, it's never going to be as hard as that. The biggest thing for me in my five year tenure there was, I found out who Dalton Risner was. When I left high school, football was really everything. My identity was in football, Dalton, the football player. Well guess what? That sport's going to end someday. You're not going to have that sport for the rest of your life. You're going to lose that. Who are you going to be then? Who are you going to be when no one wants to interview you? No one wants your autograph. You don't get special treatment. No one thinks you're cool anymore. Who are you going to be? And a lot of people struggle with that.

So, my time at Kansas State, I found out who Dalton Risner was. Football is great. This football the Lord has blessed me with, allows me to have a platform to glorify him on such a high level and I will always do that and be thankful for the game of football. However, my identity is much more strong in Jesus Christ than it is in the game of football.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Amen.

Dalton Risner: So that's the biggest thing I took from Kansas State is who Dalton Risner was. What I mean by that is, found Jesus, I started to open up the Bible and reading. I didn't just tell people I believed. I didn't just memorize verses like I did in high school to get free pizza. I did it because I wanted to get to know Jesus and I got to know Jesus and I built a unique relationship that no one else can take away from me.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Dalton, while you were there, I read this piece about building a foundation with a mission that was both positively impacting others through love and kindness. And then I read a story about the Hamptons and a child who was battling cancer, named Kaden. And it had an amazing impact on you to do a greater work.

Dalton Risner: A hundred percent. I went through an interview process with them because they told me when I told them I wanted to be a positive influence and role model for Kaden, they told me, well, a lot of people have left Kaden his life. So

we want to make sure that you're here for the long run and here for the right reasons. I'll always remember, People think when you're in college as a Division One athlete, you have money. Yeah, we really didn't. I always remember, I went to Golden Corral to do my first interview to see if I could be a part of Kaden's life, and his family really struggled to make ends meet. They really did. They did everything for their son, Kaden, and they had a GoFundMe called "Kaden's Kisses" and had been through really, really a lot of hard times. And they didn't really have money.

And I always remember them saying, "Thank you so much for taking us here. We never go out to eat, because we just don't have the money." It was a really humbling moment for me because I realized life isn't all sunshines and rainbows. People really do need help. But you know what, I need to pay for this dinner. I remember looking at my account. I had \$285 in my account. Dinner at Golden Corral for seven of us was around \$120. Little did they know, I also didn't have much to my name at all. So I paid for that dinner. And ever since that moment, I feel like something just changed in me after seeing them. To me, it was just Golden Corral. I thought that maybe I had been through some hard times, but that was a big night for them. Kaden was loading up his plate all night and I'm still best friends with Kaden.

I just bought him pizza for his birthday back in September. I was on the phone with him. We just helped him move their house to a nice plot of land that my foundation helped them do so. So you talk about my foundation, it talks about positively impacting those around me. And that's all it's about. It's not a foundation that says we're just going to help kids with cancer. We're just going to help Special Olympic athletes, people with intellectual disabilities. No, my foundation, plain and simple, is to positively impact people in this world. I just think that the biggest and most important thing we can do is slow down and think about how we can help others.

We're all brothers and sisters in Christ down here on this world. And I think we just get too caught up in our own agenda, so that's why I created the foundation is, not only do I want to do this, but I want to empower other people to be more kind. I just want to make a positive impact in people's lives.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

There's so much to the story. You're listening to Family Talk, a division of Dr. James Dobson's Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton. Our special guest today has been Dalton Risner. You watch him on Sundays. He's on the offensive line for the Denver Broncos. He's become a, I'll call him a local hero in that area. His stock is rising like crazy. It's amazing. You know why? Because there's a story here that's unreal. Dalton also put together a book it's called *Rise Up*, wrote it with Jefferson Knapp, that's been illustrated by Tim Ladwig. It's an amazing work for kids primarily. Young kids who really are on a journey. He wants to speak life into their hearts.

He wants to speak about what it means to understand who they are, their identity in Christ. He wants to use scripture in a way that helps them understand

the journey in life, the mountains are going to face and so much more. We're going to talk about that and the transition to the Broncos in tomorrow's broadcast here on Family Talk. I hope you won't miss it. Dalton, just a closing word about this part of your life and what God did in and what he's doing through you.

Dalton Risner: Well, well thank you so much, man. Being able to write *Rise Up* was an amazing opportunity. I'm so thankful for Jefferson Knapp and Kraken Books. If anyone wants to go get one it's on krakenbooks.com. I'm so proud of it. And it was just one of those callings that I talked to Jesus about and I wanted to do it. And I saw an opportunity just to write a children's book, have a bunch of cool illustrations. Those illustrations are powerful too. In that book, you're going to see Kaden, who I just talked about, who has el leukemia cancer and he beat it. He's in remission. You're going to see Michael Carpenter, one of my best friends. He's a Special Olympic athlete in Manhattan, Kansas who has intellectual disabilities. You're going to see Joanne Frederick. Joanne Frederick worked at Kansas State for 42 years as a secretary. She broke her hip my rookie year at Kansas State, freshman year.

She told me, Dalton, will you come visit me? I'm lonely. I went there once a week the rest of my time at Kansas State. I sat down with her on Wednesday nights. We ordered a pizza in. Every Wednesday, sat there and had dinner together. And those people are so important to me. And those relationships are so important. So they're throughout the book. There's scripture throughout the book. I try to talk about a couple things that I'm passionate about, which is hard work, how you treat other people, and my faith in Jesus Christ, and to dream big. That's what the book's about. Rise up in moments of trial and controversy. You know, that's what it's all about, man. So I was so excited to write it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Dalton, this has been fun. I can't wait to get into the program tomorrow. Thank you for joining us.

Dalton Risner: Thank you so much.

Roger Marsh: If you'd like to learn more about Dalton Risner, his nonprofit organization called RisnerUp or his book called *Rise Up*, visit our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. That's drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. Or give us a call at (877) 732-6825. That's (877) 732-6825. Well, it's the week of Thanksgiving and we hope that you have plans to spend time with loved ones or to volunteer at your church or maybe even a local soup kitchen. I'm Roger Marsh, thanks for listening today and be sure to join us again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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