



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Ask the Experts: Trusting Scripture

Guest(s): Lee Strobel, Alex McFarland, Josh McDowell, Erwin Lutzer, Frank Turek, David Noebel, and Gary Habermas

Air Date: November 15, 2022

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Dr. James Dobson: Welcome, everyone, to Family Talk. It's the 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 to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the radio ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, thanking you for choosing to make us a part of your day. Today's program is a true classic with Dr. Dobson. His guests are a panel of biblical experts here to explain the proven truth in God's word. And they are Lee Strobel, Alex McFarland, Josh McDowell, Erwin Lutzer, Frank Turek, David Noebel, and Gary Habermas.

Now they share their own stories of how they look at the scriptures, searching for truth and answers. Dr. Dobson will explore with these gentlemen how this search for authenticity within scripture is something most of us seek. This is part of your spiritual journey, and finding answers will transform your future and the future of your children and grandchildren as well.

In First Peter 3:15 we read, "But in your hearts, revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have with gentleness and respect." Let's join this panel now as we listen in on this important conversation on this classic edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Josh, what is the evidence that demands a verdict?

Josh McDowell: First of all, whenever you discuss Christ and claims to deity and the resurrection, you have to look at the scriptures. Are they true? Are they historically accurate and reliable? I had to answer two questions as a non-believer; is what I have today what was written down or has it been changed? What people didn't like they took out, what they did like they put in. The second question I had to answer, and anyone has to answer, was what was written down true?

On the first question, now this is just being brief, on the first question, whenever you compare anything in history, you apply in historiography. A part of any major historiography, a good one, the study of authenticity of history, is a bibliographical test. Literature of antiquity is written on material that would

perish ,and therefore they'd have to copy it over and over and over again. And so you ask two questions. One, what is the distance from the original to the closest copy of any literature? Not the Bible or anything else. With the New Testament, we go back within 60 to 70 years. The average of any other literature is about 900 to 1000 year gap. Second, you ask the number of manuscripts. And this is what I didn't know. The more manuscripts you have, the easier it is to reconstruct the original and see if it's accurate, if it's reliable, if anything's been added or taken away. The average in history, Thucydides, who many people consider the most accurate historian, eight manuscripts. Herodotus, eight manuscripts. Sophocles, 193. Aristotle, 49. Of the New Testament we now have over 24,000 manuscripts, and probably it looks like now a discovery of another 5000. And over 50,000 portions. The number two manuscript in all of history is the Iliad by Homer with 643 manuscripts.

Dr. James Dobson: How many prophecies are there in the Old Testament that were fulfilled in Jesus?

Josh McDowell: I would say there's about 200 and some major prophecies with about 130 ramifications. In other words, a prophecy was made and then later it was added to.

Dr. James Dobson: The probabilities of that occurring by chance are zero, aren't they.

Josh McDowell: Yes. There's about 333 prophecies the average person say were all fulfilled in Christ.

Dr. James Dobson: Lee, you told us that you were an atheist, you were a journalist, and you looked into this question.

Lee Strobel: Oh, absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: Very critically. You were not looking for faith, you were looking really to satisfy yourself that it wasn't true.

Lee Strobel: Well, yeah. When I was a journalist at the Chicago Tribune, I ran into all kinds of nut cases who would claim to be God. I investigated some mental hospitals and things. I found all kinds of folks like that. So anybody can claim to be God. The question is, can you back it up? And Jesus backed it up because he returned from the dead. And we have the evidence of the empty tomb, that everybody in the ancient world admitted the tomb was empty on the third day. The question was how did it get empty? But nobody claimed the body was still in it.

Secondly, we have eyewitnesses, over 515 eyewitnesses to Jesus Christ, including skeptics whose lies were transformed 180 degrees as a result of encountering the resurrected Christ. And we have early accounts. And these aren't legend that grew up many centuries later, or even many, many decades later. But we have actually provided for us, recorded for us by the apostle Paul,

a creed that was recited by the earliest Christians that contains the essence of Christianity. This creed says that Jesus died. Why? For our sins. That he was buried, that he was resurrected from the dead. And then it mentions the names of specific eyewitnesses who encountered Jesus and whose lives were changed as a result. This creed has been dated back by scholars from a wide range of theological belief to as early as two to three years after the life of Jesus Christ. And the beliefs that make up that creed go right back to the cross itself. So this is not mythology and legend that developed in the many centuries after the life of Jesus. This is a newflash from ancient history that can be trusted as being true.

Dr. James Dobson: Frank and David, you haven't spoken. Let's get your thoughts-

Frank Turek: I want to piggyback on what Lee just said there. There's another angle to this. It helps me believe that the New Testament writers didn't make this up. It's called the principle of embarrassment. If you find something in a historical text that's embarrassing to the author or authors, it's probably true. You want to take those things out. Look at the New Testament. It's filled with embarrassing details about the authors. Think about the authors. One of the biggest for me is that they were cowards. They were rebuked. Peter was rebuked when Jesus said, "Get behind me, Satan." Now, don't you think if they were making that up, Peter would've gone over to Mark and said, "Hey Mark, you know the part about the Lord calling me Satan? Can we leave that out?" And what about this? Where were the disciples when the tomb was discovered? They were hiding for fear of the Jews. The disciples run away. I mean, this is like a Monty Python movie. "Run away."

Dr. James Dobson: And they slept when Jesus was in Gethsemane.

Frank Turek: And not only that, Dr. Dobson, what they did was who discovered the empty tomb? The women. Now, in a culture like that, you would never have the women discover the empty tomb if you were making up a story. Why? Because a woman's testimony was considered inadmissible in a court of law. Secondly, who wrote this down? The men. Now, would any man in here ever say that you were hiding for fear of the Jews while the women went down and discovered the empty tomb? There is no way. You would say, "We marched right down there, we moved that sissy Roman guard out of the way, and then we saw Jesus who congratulated us on our great faith. And then we went and we comforted the trembling women." Right? They didn't make it up. This is real.

Dr. James Dobson: David?

David Noebel: Well, the issue today for many young people is science. And basically, science is king. They've been told that. And they have been told that they are Christians and therefore they're people of faith, but we're scientists and we have all the facts on our side. And what we do at the summit is the following technique. Number one, who's the father of modern science? And that turns out to be a Christian. And then we look at 41 sciences, and everyone that founded those

sciences is a Christian. And then we look at astronomy and archeology and discover that those two sciences are very friendly to Christianity and the Bible. And so you can actually use this type of material and convince them that the atheist is the one who demands the faith.

Erwin Lutzer:

I think it's very important to explain to young people that the average person today thinks that all the religions of the world are essentially the same and only superficially different. What we need to help them to see is that the opposite is true; that all the religions of the world are actually fundamentally different from Christianity. And this would be a good opportunity to point out, for example on the issue of salvation, all the other religions of the world, with no exception, believe basically in work's righteousness. It is only Christianity, because Jesus Christ died on that cross and paid for sinners, it is only we who can offer people eternal life freely. In fact, we say that you cannot work for it because it has to be God's work. There is no other religion in the world that makes the claims of Jesus that we've been talking about and that actually offers people eternal life.

Someone could be listening to this program today who feels alienated from God and wonders how they can approach the Almighty. Well, the answer is through Jesus, and receive the free gift that he offers to everyone whose saving Lee believes.

Dr. James Dobson:

Boy, that strengthens my faith.

Lee Strobel:

If I could just add one thing. You mentioned earlier, Dr. Dobson, that what if somebody approached Dr. Habermas and said, "What evidence do you have for the faith being true?" I think there are certain people, like myself and Josh McDowell and others, who had those kind of intellectual barriers. But there's other kinds of barriers that people have. Psychological barriers. And they may not even be aware of that. Paul Vitz, who's a psychologist at New York University, has done a book in which he studies the famous atheists through history. And he found that every single one of them either had a father who abandoned them when they were young or died when they were young or they had a terrible relationship with their father. So you go back to Camus and Sartre and Marx and Freud and you go right down the line. You're up to Madam Muriel Hare and you see this pattern and the inability to trust and seek after a heavenly Father if your earthly father, you're holding him responsible for abandoning you or you have a terrible relationship. So sometimes it's something as subtle as that that deters people from seeking the truth about Jesus.

Dr. James Dobson:

You had an interview many years ago with Hugh Hefner.

Lee Strobel:

Yeah. I sat down with him, talking about his view of God, and he has a very vague view of God and certainly not a Christian perspective. It was pretty much indistinguishable from agnosticism to be honest. And I asked him at one point; I said, "Well, I understand that you had a very cool and a very distant and a very detached relationship with your father. Is that true?" And he said, "Well yes, that's true." And I told him about this study that Dr. Vitz did, about the fathers

and so forth, and I said, "Do you think it might be possible that your inability to reach out to a heavenly Father is because you had such a bad relationship with your earthly father? Could that be a reason?" And he looked at me and he said, "I think it very well may be the reason." So here he is conceding that perhaps that is a barrier in his own quest to find out about a spiritual issue. So I think some people who don't realize that this may be a barrier, when they hear about this they may want to pause and say, "Well wait a minute. Is this a deterrent to me seeking after my heavenly Father?"

Dr. James Dobson: Josh, when you spoke in chapel, you went right to the heart of that issue and that relationships with parents lead directly to or directly away from a commitment and an understanding and a faith in Jesus Christ. What is that connection?

Josh McDowell: Well, in Psalm 26, verse three, King David said, "I've been constantly aware of your unfailing love and I've lived according to your truth." There's a direct correlation between relationships and love and engendering to believe and wanting to believe. One of the greatest barriers in a household today, our evangelical homes, is that the child does not believe, in the depth of my heart, that my daddy says that resurrection is true and why indeed Christ really truly loves me. That becomes an emotional barrier to believing the truth. And this is across the spectrum. I've enjoyed this today. This has been fun listening here. I'd rather listen here than talk. But in today's culture, we not only need to be equipped intellectually in everything to show that it's credible, that it's true, we must be able to show that it's relationally relevant. Because if we don't, Jim, many will walk away. But the problem today is, coming to church, well, it's all experience. It's feelings and emotion. Show it's relationally relevant. But if you can't show it's credible, then you'll have kids living New Age and calling it biblical Christianity.

Dr. James Dobson: That is so significant to us as Christians, because what that really means is that those of us who would give our lives for Christ and are doing the best we can within our own limitations to serve Him, and that we have these little children growing up around our feet, the probabilities of losing them and them not following in our footsteps is greatly increased if we're too busy to build those relationships. I think you can love a child immeasurably and you don't get around to showing it to him or her. And this relates directly to what I consider to be our primary responsibility as parents, which is to lead our children to the feet of Jesus.

Alex McFarland: Dr. Dobson, years ago, Edith and Francis Schaeffer wrote that the family is the church in miniature. It is in the family that a child first learns lessons about rights, responsibilities, reward and punishment. It is in the home that the child forms their first impressions of God. And it's no accident, no secret, that the home and the church have been under attack. And so if ever there were a time for every individual Christian, churches corporately, to be at their best, to be vigilant, to be absolutely representing Jesus on a consistent daily personal basis,

this is the time. This is the hour for the home, the church, individual believers to be at their best.

Dr. James Dobson: What other aspect of this apologetics topic should we address while I've got this marvelous panel here?

Frank Turek: Dr. Dobson, I just wanted to piggyback on what Josh said. He mentioned, it may have been over lunch, that 90% of Christians who go away to university lose their faith in the first semester or so. And I think part of the reason for that is because we haven't obeyed the greatest commandment; love the Lord, your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. And if you come to Christ because of emotional reasons, you have an emotional high of some kind, or as Josh said, "It's working for me now," then you can leave Christ because of an emotional low. You will not leave him, however, I'm speaking intellectually at this point, you will not leave him if you know that the evidence is true beyond a reasonable doubt that he was and is who he said he is. That's why apologetics is so important. You have to know not only what you believe but why you believe it. And that's why everybody here on the panel, I think, is so important, because that's what we're trying to do.

Josh McDowell: Let me take that a step further. There's a step further in apologetics here, and truth. You've got to know what you believe and why you believe it, but I believe biblically a conviction is more than that. It's experiencing it. Especially today. See, almost every one of us in this room, people listening now, the adults, in our mindset, the way we were raised, the way we were trained, if it is true, it will work. Our kids do not think that way. They do not process truth that way. Almost every single kid processes it this way. If it works, it is true. And if they don't see that it works, you can have some of the greatest arguments in all the world and they'll walk away. They've got to know what they believe, why they believe it and experience it in their life. 89% of born again church kids will say, "You know something is true if it works."

Frank Turek: I mean, I'm going in apologetic mode here, Josh. Lying works and it's not true.

Josh McDowell: That's right. That's why you've got to be able to show it's credible and relationally relevant. That's why it's not either/or. It's both. It's relationships and truth.

Gary Habermas: For the last few decades, I was pretty surprised. I came from a skeptical viewpoint to Christianity too. I told my mother after my grad work that I was very close to becoming a Buddhist. I was enamored by this question of doubt. I've been studying the doubt subject for about 30 years. And lately we've been testing this with a clinical psychologist friend of mine, and about 80%, as nearly as we can tell, about 80% of all Christians who doubt, this also works with unbelievers, the majority of people who doubt, doubt not for factual, but for emotional reasons.

Josh McDowell: That's right.

Gary Habermas: And so, if we don't have something that melds the head and the heart, you don't get through. But there's something else there. You just don't not get through as an evangelism, they don't keep what they first committed themselves to. So if you come for emotional reasons, as already has been mentioned, you reject for emotional reasons. But the majority of people who ask questions, ask what if questions in spite of the data. It's what if it's false? All these religions in the world; what if we missed the boat? Well, you have all these facts, but what if we missed the boat? So part of this is not just knowing what you believe, but it's a discipline. It's having the discipline to train your thoughts and your feelings to follow the data.

Dr. James Dobson: Dr. Lutzer, we've all been aware, I think, that the book, *The Da Vinci Code*, has been enormously successful in the secular marketplace. And probably a lot of Christians have read that book too. And it's not fact. It is fiction. And yet it is taken as fact. You've written a book. Give me the actual title.

Erwin Lutzer: The actual title is *The Da Vinci Deception*.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. Help debunk that book very quickly.

Erwin Lutzer: All right. First of all, I want to agree that it is the most serious attack against Christianity that I've ever encountered because people are reading it and they're believing it. And *The Da Vinci Code* attacks the two things that are most important to us; the deity of Christ, by saying that Christ was a mere man until the Council of Nicaea in 325 when Constantine made him into a God. And then secondly, that the Gnostic gospels are more reliable than the New Testament. Now of course, when you look at it from that standpoint, you realize that *The Da Vinci Code* is really a house of cards held together by ropes of mist. In other words, it is indeed a novel. But because it wraps itself in history and quotes the Gnostic Gospels where Mary Magdalene is referred to, it concludes that Mary Magdalene was married to Jesus, they had a child. The Holy Grail actually is Mary Magdalene because she bore in her own body the blood of Christ.

Now, very briefly, two things. First, Constantine did not invent the deity of Jesus Christ. It's true that he was at the Council of Nicaea, gave the opening speech, but the delegates came to this conclusion; it's taught in the New Testament. The early church fathers believed in the deity of Christ 200 years before the Council of Nicaea. And secondly, the Gnostic gospels are fraudulent. The early church knew about them. And we know that for a couple of reasons. Number one, the gospel of Philip, for example, was written in about the year 250 AD. Now I have a question for everyone. Whose understanding of George Washington would you rather accept; someone who knew him and lived with him or someone who wrote about him 200 years after he existed? So the Gnostic gospels are not reliable. There are so many arguments that could be given to show that. But unfortunately, we have people reading this novel and they're going to say to themselves, "The church has hidden this from us. There's been this conspiracy.

Jesus wanted to build a church on Mary Magdalene. And lo and behold, men stole it from her and they built it on Peter." And the answer is nonsense.

Dr. James Dobson: And that is dangerous.

Erwin Lutzer: Very dangerous.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, when I was in college, I was a psychology major and I wanted to know everything I could about human behavior. And I called my mother. I was 19 years old. I called my mother and I said, "Guess what, mom?" And she said, "What?" I said, "I'm going to go to a Satanic church on Sunday, because I just want to observe. I want to see what they do and what they think." She begged me not to do that and implored me. And even put it on a personal level; "Don't do it for me."

Erwin Lutzer: You had a very wise mother.

Dr. James Dobson: And I listened to her and I didn't go. And I have been grateful ever since that I didn't put that nonsense in my head.

Erwin Lutzer: Yes. And it's so important for people to understand that when their young people read this, what they need to do is to make sure they get the facts. I've had people say, "Well, as long as you know the Bible, you're okay." That isn't true. Because unless you know something about the Council of Nicaea, unless you understand the Gnostic gospels, you can't answer *The Da Vinci Code*. I would like to turn that into a positive and say to those who are listening who've read *The Da Vinci Code* or their children have read it, use it as an opportunity to teach your children about the deity of Christ and the reliability of the New Testament manuscripts. Compare the Gnostic gospels with Josh McDowell's book, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*.

Dr. James Dobson: In other words, apologetics-

Josh McDowell: Amen. Preach it, brother.

Dr. James Dobson: We have about 20 books here we could recommend. In other words, I started to say, in other words, apologetics for children. They need it too. Maybe not on the level we're talking about here, but they need to understand why, right?

Lee Strobel: Yeah. One of the reasons I ended up doing youth additions of my books is because we had such demand by young people, saying-

Dr. James Dobson: You recommend your book.

Lee Strobel: Well, they're saying-

Dr. James Dobson: Anybody else want to recommend one of their books?

Frank Turek: Oh, Lee's got some good stuff in the youth department.

Dr. James Dobson: I know. I interviewed him.

Lee Strobel: But I think it is important for young people especially. That's why I took that first step toward atheism when I was a kid, a youngster in junior high school, because I had questions that nobody was willing to engage with me and to give me answers. And if we can help inoculate the kids against a kind of skepticism they're going to encounter in high school and in college, then they'll be better off for it.

Roger Marsh: You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and if you missed any part of today's program, go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. On our website you'll find today's program as well as many other broadcasts that discuss the wide range of issues that we as Christians consider every day. Feel free to explore the programs we have broadcast and know that we are working hard here at the JDFI to provide you with content that you can use to strengthen your Christian walk.

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