



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Contagious Faith – Part 2

Guest(s): Mark Mittelberg

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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: Welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. And today on the program, we are sharing the second half of Dr. Tim Clinton's conversation with author and evangelist Mark Mittelberg. They'll be talking about Mark's latest book, *Contagious Faith: Discover Your Natural Style for Sharing Jesus with Others*. Now, if you missed part one of their conversation, you can listen to it when you go to drjamesdobson.org/broadcast.

Mark Mittelberg is a bestselling author, an international speaker, and the executive director of the Lee Strobel Center for Evangelism and Applied Apologetics at Colorado Christian University. Mark and his wife, Heidi, live near Denver, Colorado, and are the parents of Emma Jean and Matthew. Today, Dr. Clinton and Mark Mittelberg are talking more about how you can discover your natural style for sharing Christ. Let's listen in to the conversation right now.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I want to get into these natural styles for sharing Jesus with others. You teased it out yesterday. We closed with a conversation a little bit about our families and Dr. Dobson's line "be there." There's no greater gift as a parent you can give to your kids than to help them understand and hopefully embrace a relationship with God in Christ. Mark, let's start there. That's the heart of all of this.

Mark Mittelberg: Absolutely. I love talking to it because the *Contagious Faith* book is dedicated to both my grandmother and my dad who took a family that was not following the Lord, let's just put it that way. First, my grandmother came to Christ, and then my father, who was trying to escape a situation with an alcoholic father. He signed up for the Navy while World War II was still raging. That really strikes me as like, how badly do you want to get away from a rough family situation? But he did and he joined the Navy.

And while he was in bootcamp, the war ended. But God used it. And again, the story's in the book, but his commanding officer turned out to be a believer and shared Christ with him, took a very direct approach, but also a friendship building approach. My dad ended up going to an event with an upstart ministry

called Youth for Christ, and my dad heard the gospel and gave his life to Christ, and then followed Christ from there on out. He went to college at Wheaton where he met my mom.

He married my mom and he raised a family to know Christ, as he says, using the Old King James raised us in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. I grew up knowing what was right and believing it, but then kind of took an excursion through my high school years. But then finally at age 19, one night, I was probably coming back from a party or something and I tried to sneak in and get up to my bedroom. I still lived at home at that point, and he kind of cut me off at the pass.

He looked at me and he talked to me about the Lord and said, "I've done my best to raise you in the truth." But he said, "I've committed you to the Lord. I'm putting you in the Lord's hands." I remember thinking "Good, that means you're not going to bug me about stuff." And then the second thought was, "but the Lord sees everything." It's like he put me into the hands of an omniscient presence and this is scary.

Well, that was an eye opening night for me, and it began a process where it wasn't long out after that I gave my life to Christ and really for real committed my life to Jesus. But it was because of the influence, like I say, of my dad, my mom, my Christian siblings, and my grandmother, Effa Mittelberg, who prayed for me every day. And that's part of my passion now with teaching others is, again, not just to reach people out there somewhere.

People you have to meet or work with or in the neighborhood, but your own sons and daughters and their kids, people within the family circle who are created to know Christ, but need to come to know Him personally.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I'm thinking of the words of John when he wrote, "I have no greater joy than to know my children walk in the truth." The Scripture says there's rejoicing in the presence of the angels. Mark, you think that is in reference of people coming to Christ?

Mark Mittelberg: Oh, it's clear. Yeah, that's Luke 15, that there's a party in Heaven for every sinner who repents, every one of us when we turn to Christ. When I was 19 and I finally quit going my own way and said yes to Jesus, I think there was a party for me. I think there's a whole bunch of parties waiting to happen for the people that we're called to reach, the people we're supposed to be talking to. We just got to do our part and take a small risk. What are we really risking anyway? They say, "I don't agree with that, or I'm not sure." Okay, that doesn't devastate my life. Let's keep talking.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I love what we talked about yesterday, Mark, and I want to go back there. God began to work in you. And man, is He doing a work in and through you to train people to be bold and contagious in their faith walk. Mark, God I believe

revealed to you styles of how we influence people for Christ. Let's go back to that conversation we started yesterday.

Mark Mittelberg: Sure.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And let's start out with that very first style.

Mark Mittelberg: I'd love to.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Mark, there got to be strengths and weaknesses to all of them, right?

Mark Mittelberg: Yeah, and I write about that in the *Contagious Faith* book. For instance, the first one is the friendship building, and these are people that are people, people, and they love to build strong friendships and warm relationships and have great conversations. The danger is that you start caring more about the smooth friendship, you don't want to ripple the pond too much by bringing up hard issues and so forth.

I think in that case, I just want to remind us that the most loving thing we can do is point people back to Christ or if they've kind of veered off the rails spiritually to bring them back. Because it tells us in Galatians 6, if someone wanders away, bring them back. We've got to be willing to risk them not liking it. I told you before about when I was 19, the guy who challenged me and he said, "You claimed to be a Christian, but I know too much about your life." And I said, "Well, I'm a cool Christian." That was my response. That was the best thing I can come up with at the moment. We don't get hung up on the rules.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You didn't wear those big blue jeans and bell bottoms and all that, didn't you?

Mark Mittelberg: I probably did. We used to have more fun. He goes, "Well, there's a term for cool Christians." And I said, "What's that?" And he said, "Hypocrites." By the way, that was not the friendship building style. That was the truth telling style, very direct. That's like Peter in the Bible. I was mad. I kind of attacked him. I said, "Well, you think your life is perfect, Terry? You got everything figured out?" And he said, "No, but at least I'm honest about it."

He made me angry, but he made me think and that thought and reflection turned to repentance over the next few days. And within a week's time, I gave my life to Christ. With all of these styles, we've got to be willing to speak hard truth sometimes, to speak the truth in love, as Paul says. I think for a friendship builder, build those friendships, but get to the point too. Get to the point where you say, "Could I share something with you that is really the most important thing I think I could tell you, and that's about my Savior?" And again, you'll feel awkward at times or it won't come out quite right, but God can use you anyway.

Dr. Tim Clinton: But if you have a relationship with that person, yeah, it tends to really open up their heart's door. Because a lot of people have closed spirits, Mark. I know in

my own life, I appreciate people who I really believe care and are invested in me when we have a relationship, that does something to me. The second style selfless serving.

Mark Mittelberg: Yes. Example is Tabitha in Acts 9 who was making clothing for needy people. It must have been important, because if you read the text in Acts 9, she died and God sent an apostle. He sent Peter to pray over her, raise her back to life, and put her back to work. This stuff's important. We underestimate how important it is in the kingdom of Heaven and how much God wants us to be active in sharing our faith. Tabitha did that.

She was kind of like a first century Mother Teresa serving in tangible physical ways that caused heads to turn heavenward and think in spiritual ways about God and about His salvation. I just love folks with this style. It's not my main one, but they see needs that a lot of us don't see. They find joy in meeting them. But again, you mentioned the cautions or kind of the downside. A lot of times these folks want to serve silently. My challenge to them is you're opening doors.

You're building bridges with hurting people in many cases, but don't neglect to tell them the most important part, and that's that the love of Jesus is what motivates you. And that He's changed you and He can change them. He's forgiven you. He can forgive them. You got to get to the point of the gospel and not just do loving acts of service.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We host an annual men's event. Mark, I often see men want to serve and they don't know how or what to do. They struggle with relationships. Maybe they struggle with drawing on Scripture and having a lot of Scripture verses in their "bank." But they're really good at taking some kids out fishing, teaching them how to build an engine, coaching a baseball team, or what have you. In your mind, that's a great way to evangelize. Just make sure you bring it all the way home is what you're saying.

Mark Mittelberg: Yeah. Paul said, "How will they know," this is Romans 10, "How will they know unless we go to them and tell them?" There's some people that like to promote approaches to evangelism where you just live it and you don't ever say anything. That's not biblical. We do need to live it. And if you have the selfless serving style, boy, again, you'll reach the hardest to reach people. But you won't really reach them unless you get to the point where you talk about it. You've got to put it in words in.

Whether you do it verbally in the normal discussion, or give them a little book to read, or point them to a good radio broadcast, or however you do it, to point them to a source of truth and to the source that will share the gospel with them, then you're mixing truth and love and you can really reach them for Christ.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, president of the American Association of Christian Counselors and your host here today.

Our special, I'll call it in studio guest is Mark Mittelberg. We're up at his place, up in the mountains here in Colorado and having a dynamic conversation about his new book, *Contagious Faith: Discover Your Natural Style for Sharing Jesus with Others*. Mark, I love this. I really do. I think a lot of people are going to say, "I want to really press in to my natural gifting here."

I didn't realize that I had a natural gift in evangelism, and I want to learn to do that really well. And I don't want to leave it short. I want to bring it all the way home." We're up to our third style, Mark, and it's about story sharing.

Mark Mittelberg: Yes, and this is the one that flows out of our own experience. By the way, I should add, I think we can all do elements of these. If you're a follower of Jesus, you have a story to share. There might be times you'll use it and other times you won't. But for some of us, like I mentioned, Lee Strobel, my friend who wrote *The Case for Christ* and a bunch of other great books, that's his main approach. He tells his story. "I used to be an atheist. Now I found Christ." But what I caution people on this is you don't have to have been an atheist.

You don't have to have been in prison or some dramatic story. I was a boring church kid who wandered away from my faith. Whatever your story is, there's people out there that will relate to it. Again, for some of us, this is our main approach is to talk about our own experience with Christ in ways that will relate to them. I always try to remind people that the most important person in that conversation is the person you're talking to.

In other words, you tell the parts of your story that will relate best to them, because what you're trying to do is show them through your life that they can find what they need. You're applying your experience to their situation.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Mark, people, they shouldn't play down these giftings they have. And that's what I want people to make sure they hear today. These are natural giftings that people have. You're identifying them and saying, "Grow them for the power of the gospel."

Mark Mittelberg: Steward what God gave you. He gave you your personality on purpose. You're not an accident. We use that verse where he knit me together in my mother's womb. Well, that's not true just physically. It's true emotionally in terms of your personality. God needed a lot of unique people. He didn't need a bunch of clones. He gave you your unique mix and he wants to work through it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Mark, some have the gift of what you call is reason giving style.

Mark Mittelberg: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Explain that to us.

Mark Mittelberg: Yeah. Some of us are just hopelessly logical.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Like a Mark Mittelberg.

Mark Mittelberg: Yeah. When I talk to people and they say, "Give me something emotional," it's like, "Oh, I'll try, but let me give you some logic with it." Because our God is a God that makes sense and the Bible presents truth that can be investigated. We have evidence for our faith. I think there's a lot of young people who are drifting from their faith because they've been convinced it's based on myths and the Bible's full of mistakes. I just want to say, "Oh yeah? Let's look at it. Let's reason together. Let's study this."

A lot like Paul and Paul's the example I use in the *Contagious Faith* book where in Acts 17, he's on Mars Hill talking to a bunch of philosophers. He reasons with them, and he presents a logical presentation of the gospel. And some of these hardcore philosophers end up giving their lives to Christ right at the end of passage. We live in a secular culture where people have doubts. They have questions. They need information.

I think more than ever, we need to be ready, as it says in 1 Peter 3:15, to give a reason for the hope that we have, to give answers, to give logic so that people say, "Okay, this makes sense." And not that that automatically makes them a Christian, but it opens the door for them to say, "All right, now that I see it's true, what's the point?" The point is, you're a sinner who needs a Savior just like me. You can trust the God who will forgive you and give you eternal life.

By the way, this may be worth mentioning, I talk about Lee Strobel being a storyteller. He's also a reason giver.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Sure, he is.

Mark Mittelberg: I want to use that to kind of illustrate something. We're not trying to limit anyone to one of these. You may be two or three or four. You may have all of them. Great. You got lots of rails to run on. But the point is, you can do at least one of these.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I think one of the saddest pieces in the Bible was it with Paul, with King Agrippa and the statement was "Almost, thou persuaded me to be a Christian."

Mark Mittelberg: Acts 26. Yeah. You've almost persuaded me. I like how Paul doesn't back down and say, "Well, I wasn't trying to persuade you." Of course, he was. Paul often said we persuade people. That's what we do, because some Christians get nervous. "Well, you're trying to change someone's mind." Yeah, because they need the truth. Yes, we are like Paul trying to persuade people and show them this is true and it's truth you need. Are we trying to change minds? Absolutely, but not in a manipulative way.

We're not trying to force anyone. We're just trying to say we've got good reason to believe what we believe about God and about the Bible and about Jesus and it makes sense. And more than that, it leads to life. Let's look into it together.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. The final style is the truth telling style.

Mark Mittelberg: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Mark, those are the ones who God has just called them to just stand up and be bold and strong. Not that the other styles aren't. By the way, God uses it.

Mark Mittelberg: Oh, absolutely. These are people that have kind of an edge a little bit. This is Peter is our example in Scripture. Day of Pentecost, he gets up and gives his sermon. He basically says, "God sent his Messiah. You killed him. You're in big trouble." It's like he's not beating around. This is a Jewish audience. He's saying, "You crucified the Messiah. You're in trouble." And they're going, "We know. What do we have to do to be saved?"

He said, "I'm so glad you asked. Well, here's the good news, the Messiah you murdered came back to life three days later and He's not mad at you. He wants to forgive you. He wants to give you life." He just very directly presents the truth. You know the rest of the story, 3,000 people said yes and trusted Christ and were baptized into the church that day. I love people with this very direct hard-hitting approach.

Dr. Tim Clinton: John the Baptist. The Billy Graham's and more.

Mark Mittelberg: Greg Laurie. Franklin Graham.

Dr. Tim Clinton: D. James Kennedy and all those people. Yes.

Mark Mittelberg: Exactly. They're very hard hitting, very direct. And like my friend Terry who challenged me when I gave my life to Christ at age 19, the main thing is to just have the courage to speak up and to kind of challenge people to get off the fence, because a lot of people are on the fence and need that kind of challenge like I did.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Mark, I had someone tell me early as a preacher boy back in the day that, "Tim, you can't save anybody. No one comes under the father save the spirit draw him or her." What you're doing is you are an agent, if you will, conduit through which God channels that message. Our requirement is simply to be faithful, to be stewards of that talent or that calling in our lives, right?

Mark Mittelberg: Yeah. To speak up. Sometimes people get hyper spiritual with this and they'll say, "I can't save anyone. God has to do it. And therefore, I'm not doing anything." Well, that's a cop out because He chose us as His vehicle. There is a divinely ordained partnership between God and us. We can't do anything

without Him, but we are called to be His witnesses. As we go out and open our mouths and take risks and speak up and feel inadequate afterwards, we usually do, but Jesus said, "Lo, I will be with you always."

The more we open our mouths and take risks for the sake of the gospel, the more people end up in Heaven.

Dr. Tim Clinton: If we ended this broadcast and we didn't share the gospel, I think we missed everything. Mark, could you just share the gospel maybe for someone who's driving down the road? Someone who's in their home right now and they're saying, "I want to know who they know. I want that freedom in my life."

Mark Mittelberg: I'd love to. The good news of the gospel is that even though we've offended and disobeyed a Holy God, and even though we deserve His punishment, we deserve separation from God for eternity, He didn't want it to end up that way. He loves us too much, and He said, "I'm going to send my son to pay the penalty you deserve, and He's going to die cross for you." And that's exactly what He did. Jesus wasn't coerced to come. He said, "Here I am. Send me." He came and willingly gave His life for you.

All we need to do is admit that we're sinners who need a savior and acknowledge that Jesus is the Savior who God sent, who died for us, who rose to give us life, and to say yes to Him. That's what I did when I was 19. God, I'm tired of going my own way. I know I've disobeyed you. I've sinned against you. Forgive me. Cleanse me. Please be my forgiver and be my leader from this day forward. I did that and that changed my life forever.

If you'll say yes to him and make him your forgiver and leader, it'll change your life from this day forward.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We've spent two days talking about *Contagious Faith*, your new book, *Discover Your Natural Style for Sharing Jesus with Others*. Let me say this, if you don't have a copy of this book, you need to get this book. Mark, there's a video series that goes with this. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

Mark Mittelberg: Yeah. I'm so excited about it. It's six weeks. It's video. I teach on it and it's for your small group or your class or even whole churches can go through it together like maybe a Sunday night series or Sunday morning or whatever. We go through these five styles and help everyone identify there's. There's a questionnaire you fill out to help know what your top style is and any secondary styles you have. I also interview people who are examples of the five styles.

But anyway, we go through that and it'll help everyone in your group discover their style and key skills they need to develop to become effective. You can all do this together.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Mark, you also mentioned the Strobel Center at Colorado Christian University. Just share with our listeners a little bit about what's happening there.

Mark Mittelberg: Oh, I'm so excited. Lee and I have been ministry partners for over 30 years. We're all about reaching people and training others to do the and teaching apologetics. Well, we started the Lee Strobel Center for Evangelism and Applied Apologetics at Colorado Christian University. And yes, that's a mouthful, but we're so excited about it, where you can come and get an accredited degree in evangelism or apologetics.

You can get a master's degree, an undergraduate degree, or we have low cost certificate courses you can take just to learn the information. Maybe you don't care about getting college credit. But folks can learn more about that. We have a website, strobelcenter.com. They can learn about it, sign up. We want to help train you to be more and more effective in these areas.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You know what's exciting, Mark, is I know these, again, unprecedented times. These are difficult days. But the exciting thing is God is moving. He's at work. Really excited about what you all are doing up there at Colorado Christian University and really excited about this book. Mark, is there a website someone could go to, to just find everything?

Mark Mittelberg: Yes. We have a site called contagiousfaithbook.com. It's just the title of the book and the word book, contagiousfaithbook.com. They can get information on the book, the six week training course. There's actually a little online questionnaire they can do to help identify what their top style is, and there's discounts on the materials for churches and groups as well.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hey, on behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, the entire team at Family Talk, we tip the hat to you guys. Again, we're going to pray that God will do a work where only He can get all the praise and glory for it. Thank you so much, Mark, for joining us.

Mark Mittelberg: Thank you.

Roger Marsh: You're listening to Family Talk. And that was the conclusion of Dr. Tim Clinton's important conversation with Mark Mittelberg. These two Christian leaders talked about our call as followers of Christ to share the gospel. God has given you just the tools you need to share the good news in your own personal style right where you are. For more information about Mark Mittelberg, his newest book, *Contagious Faith*, or if you'd like to listen to any part of the program that you may have missed, just visit drjamesdobson.org/broadcast.

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