



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** The Case for Miracles: From Skeptic to Evangelist – Part 1

**Guest(s):** Lee Strobel

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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 with your host, psychologist, and best-selling author Dr. James Dobson. The voice you trust for the family you love. I'm Roger Marsh. In 1 Peter 3:15, Scripture reminds us that we are to always be prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. As Christians, all of us have an unbelieving friend or a loved one that we can evangelize to, and we can pray for God to soften their heart to the gospel. Well, on today's broadcast, you're going to hear the story of a skeptic and atheist whose life was completely transformed when he discovered the evidence that Jesus is the living, breathing, risen lord. That former skeptic's name is Lee Strobel. You might know him as the bestselling author of *The Case for Christ*.

Well, today on the broadcast, Lee will be sharing his testimony and discussing the importance of apologetics in witnessing to others. The interview you're about to hear was recorded in our conference room here at the Dobson Institute headquarters in Colorado Springs. A select group of patrons and visitors were also in attendance for this live recording, and they were enthralled by Lee's story, to say the least. Let's go to part one now of Dr. Dobson's conversation with Lee Strobel on today's edition of Family Talk.

**Dr. James Dobson:** We have an incredible program scheduled for today, and it involves my good friend Lee Strobel. Lee is a former atheist turned Christian apologist. He received his undergraduate degree in journalism from the University of Missouri and graduated from Yale Law School with a Master's of Studies in Law degree. Lee worked in journalism for 14 years, most of that time as a legal editor at the *Chicago Tribune*, where he was honored for his investigatory work. Since becoming a Christian, he has served as a teaching pastor at Willow Creek Community Church, Saddleback Valley Community Church, and currently at Woodlands Church near Houston, Texas. There's another page or two of introductory-

**Lee Strobel:** That's plenty.

Dr. James Dobson: ... material here because you have really been a busy man. And I have great respect for you, Lee, at what you're doing.

Lee Strobel: It's mutual.

Dr. James Dobson: You're primarily an apologist, aren't you?

Lee Strobel: I am. And I think in the 21st century, evangelism is spelled apologetics because so many people have tough questions and objections to the faith that they pick up on the internet or from skeptical friends. Our country is sliding further away from God in many ways. And so I think it's important today that we be able to defend why we believe what we believe, what evidence is there that supports the Christian faith, how can we answer questions that people have, especially our kids and our grandkids. I'm telling you-

Dr. James Dobson: They are not going to get it in the culture.

Lee Strobel: No, not at all. I'll do a book signing and every third person in line, and I don't think that's an exaggeration, will say to me, "My son or my daughter or my grandson or my granddaughter went to church and went through the youth program, they went away to school. They just told me, they're now an atheist, what do I do?" And I get that all the time. And I think it's a reflection of our culture in many ways. And I think we need to be prepared to help point them back toward the truth of Christ.

Dr. James Dobson: How many times have you been asked the question, why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?

Lee Strobel: I did a survey through George Barna and I asked a cross-section of Americans if you could ask God any one question and you knew He'd give you an answer right now, what would you ask Him? And by a factor of five to one, the number one question is, why does God allow pain and suffering? And you know how I usually answer that question? Somebody will say to me, "Hey, I got a question. Why does God allow pain and suffering?" And I don't answer it, I ask them another question. I say, "Well, let me ask you this. Of all the possible questions in the universe for you to ask, why did you ask me that one?" And often they'll say, "Because we lost a child in childbirth five years ago, or because my wife has walked out on me, or I've lost my job and I can't get another job, and we're broke, and we're facing bankruptcy and I don't know what to do." Now, we're really reaching the issue because often the issue is not really purely intellectual objection, it's an emotional question.

Dr. James Dobson: It's the big why question.

Lee Strobel: It's a big why question. And theologians can give answers to the question, and we talk about how we have free will and that we've abused our free will. We've walked away from God and we suffer the consequences of that, but then God

and His love and His wisdom has provided a way back for us through Jesus Christ. There is hope. There is going to be ultimate justice. There is going to be ultimate accountability. There's going to be a resolution of the suffering that we have ultimately in Heaven.

Dr. James Dobson: Those answers while theologically valid are not very satisfying to somebody who is suffering.

Lee Strobel: Exactly. And what they need is you to put your arm around their shoulder and say, I'm so sorry. Let's sit down. Tell me about it, and let's talk about it. God provided a personal answer through Jesus Christ Himself. And so as we sit with them, as we commiserate with them, as we empathize with them, as we extend the love of God to them, that's generally the way that we end up reaching them.

Dr. James Dobson: And let's talk about *The Case for Faith*. That is a wonderful book.

Lee Strobel: Oh, thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: I interviewed you on that book probably 15 years ago.

Lee Strobel: Yes. God continues to use those books because we're living in a culture where people have the tough questions and people are searching for answers. And the good news of that is, we have a defensible faith. If you look at the evidence for Christianity and my friend Mark Mittelberg does a talk on this where he points 20 arrows of evidence that point toward the truth of Christianity, everything from the reliability of the gospels, to the fulfillment of messianic prophecies, to the resurrection of Jesus, to the creation of the world that got cosmology, physics, biochemistry, genetics. I mean, I could spend hours just building the case.

Now, having said that, what do we have on the other side? Well, the best objection is, why does God allow pain and suffering? And it's a legitimate question. It's an important question. It is a question as we say that often needs an emotional answer, not necessarily an intellectual response. But when you weigh it on the scale, the evidence for the Christian faith is overwhelming.

Dr. James Dobson: And, in fact, Lee, that's what brought you into the kingdom.

Lee Strobel: That's right. I was a-

Dr. James Dobson: You were an atheist, I said that in the beginning. Now, that just means you had closed the door to any possibility that Christ was who He says He was and is.

Lee Strobel: That's right. Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: But how did you find Him? You've told that story before, it hasn't changed. Tell us how in the world you found this Lord?

Lee Strobel:

Yeah. Well, my wife was agnostic. She was just spiritually confused and... We got married young, I was 20 she was 19. Because I was an atheist and had no moral framework, I lived a very drunken and narcissistic and self-absorbed and self-destructive profane life. And it got ugly. My daughter, Allison, when she was just a toddler, if she was alone in the living room playing with some toys or whatever, and she would hear me come home from work through the front door, her natural reaction was just to gather her toys and go in her room and shut the door. And what people saw was me winning awards for investigative reporting and writing books and doing media, and winning awards for journalism. They didn't see the other side, which was me literally drunk in the snow in an alley on Saturday night.

So, I was successful, but I was also a narcissist and a drunk. So my wife is dealing with that, which was not easy for her to do. She meets a woman who was a Christian, who was a nurse, who was a neighbor. They became best friends. This woman shared Jesus with her. Leslie went to church with her, she checks it out. And one day she comes up to me in the kitchen. If you've seen the movie on our life, *The Case for Christ* movie, this is so well-portrayed. She said to me, "I made a big decision. I decided to become a follower of Jesus." And I thought divorce, I was going to walk out. This is the worst news I could possibly get. In fact, this is embarrassing. Yes, all of this is embarrassing. I had to mow the lawn and I went out, and she had planted this beautiful flower garden, and I mowed it all down that day just out of anger.

So, I thought, if I could disprove the resurrection of Jesus, I could get her out of this cult. So I thought I can do this in a weekend because certainly dead people don't come back to life. Right? Well, I began investigating it using my journalism and legal education. And it took me two years. And after two years of looking for the evidence that Jesus not only claimed to be the son of God but backed it up by returning from the dead. I sat there, I reviewed the evidence on November the 8th of 1981. And I realized in light of the avalanche of evidence that points so powerfully toward the truth of Christianity, it would've required more faith for me to maintain my atheism than to become a Christian. And like the scales just tipped.

Dr. James Dobson:

Did anybody help you?

Lee Strobel:

Along the way, sure. I mean, I was a journalist, so I would interview people, I would go to experts, I would study ancient history and archeology. So, I was kind of pursuing it as I would a major story for the *Chicago Tribune*. So I was able to accumulate all of this data historically, it's fascinating. Even Christians are not aware of the depth and the breadth of the evidence that Jesus really did return from the dead. This is not fairytale. It's not wishful thinking. It's not make-believe. It's not legend. It's not mythology. This is an actual historical event for which we have stunningly good evidence. And so what happened though was, I realized after I came... I reached my verdict in *The Case for Christ*, which is that Jesus is the unique son of God, based on the evidence I was convinced.

But then I realized, there had to be more. And I looked at John 1:12, says, "But as many as received Him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." And I realized that verse forms an equation of what it means to become a child of God. Believe plus receive equals become. So, I believed based on the data that Jesus claimed to be the son of God, He backed it up by returning from the dead. I got that, but I had to take another step. I had to receive His free gift of forgiveness and eternal life, this free gift of His grace, and then I would become a child of God. So I got on my knees and I poured out a confession of a lifetime of immorality that would curl your hair. And at that moment I received complete and total forgiveness through Jesus Christ and I became a child of God.

Dr. James Dobson: Was it an emotional thing?

Lee Strobel: You know what? A lot of people say I have a rush of emotion at that moment. I had a rush of reason. It was the rush of reason. This is true. This is history. This is science. This is reality. And then, Leslie threw her arms around me and she said, "I almost gave up on you a thousand times." And starting on that day, my little girl who at that time was five years old, who'd only known a dad who was absent, angry, kicking holes in walls out of rage, drunk. That's all she knew first five years of her life. But starting on that day, she started to watch, something's changing with my dad. Something is different with my dad.

Dr. James Dobson: And she could tell it at five.

Lee Strobel: She could tell it. And four or five months later, she went up to Leslie. You know what she said? "I want God to do for me, what He's done for daddy."

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, my goodness.

Lee Strobel: And so she received Jesus on that day and now she's married to a seminary graduate, and she's a novelist. She has five or six novels that have been published, but they all have the gospel in them. And we're the best of friends. And she's the mother of two of my four grandchildren. And then my son saw the difference God was making in his mom and his dad and his sister, he came to faith as a kid, but he took an academic route. He got a PhD in theology from the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, and he's now a professor at Biola University.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that right?

Lee Strobel: So a theologian. So God changed our life.

Dr. James Dobson: You know what? You're speaking of an emotional response. I've told this so many times, people can quote it themselves. But I was four, I was sitting in church on a Sunday night. My dad was a preacher, and in our church tradition, we have an altar. And he asked people if they'd like to come to the altar and give their heart to Christ? And people stepped into the aisle and they were all

walking. And I didn't ask my mother, I was sitting by her and I just followed them. And I stepped out in the aisle and I went to the altar and I wept like the baby I was. I don't know where I got that sense of contrition, but at four you're-

Lee Strobel: You were sorry about your terrible twos.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Pulled the dog's tail or something now. I don't know what it was.

Lee Strobel: But, you think about that and how that changed your life and then generations to come, especially through your ministry. And I look at our family and I see my grandchildren now. I don't want to cry if I say this, but my little granddaughter, Abigail, who's 12 years old, when she was 10, went on her first missions trip. And somebody took a picture of her leading a little kindergarten girl to faith in Christ.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, my.

Lee Strobel: So here you have the next generation reaching out and spreading this love of God, and God rescued our family like-

Dr. James Dobson: Lee, isn't it interesting that when you were this rotten guy by your own, that mission-

Lee Strobel: Hey, I didn't use the word rotten.

Dr. James Dobson: I extrapolated a little there.

Lee Strobel: Yeah. You are a psychologist so.

Dr. James Dobson: You were a bad dude.

Lee Strobel: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: And isn't it interesting that God in your sinful state wanted a relationship with you and led you to find Him? I mean, how can you explain that? Why would He care about you?

Lee Strobel: And that's a great point because not only did He love me for some inexplicable reason, but He reached me the very way I needed to be reached.

Dr. James Dobson: Talk about the millennials because a lot of us are concerned about that generation. And they seem to require more evidence certainly than I did and that a lot of people did. And are they open when you lay the facts out, the case for faith in Jesus Christ, what kind of reactions are you getting from that generation?

Lee Strobel: I see a lot of different phenomenon going on with the millennials. I did a study and I compared the increase in fatherless families in America with the increase in skepticism toward God, and they are on a parallel path. We have a lot of millennials who don't have a dad, or they have an absent father, or an uninvolved father, or a cold-hearted father. And we're seeing the percentages of babies born without families with dads. And we see at the same time an increase in skepticism toward God. I think there's a connection.

Dr. James Dobson: I don't doubt that a bit. In fact, one of my favorite stories from the child-rearing era was when I was speaking, I was away from home and Ryan was two years of age. And, Shirley, turned to him for the first time and said, "Would you like to pray for our food?" And it shocked him. And she said, "He looked around and he kind of took a deep breath, and then he said, I love you, daddy. Amen." That was as closest he could get to God because he identified me with God. And when I got home, that scared me because I'm not God, and I'm not perfect. And to represent God was too big a job, and yet God has put us in that role and in that responsibility.

Lee Strobel: He has. If you studied the famous atheists of history, Camus, Sartre, Nietzsche, Freud, Voltaire, Wells, Feuerbach, O'Hair, every one of them had a father who died when they were young, who divorced their mother when they were young or with whom they had a very bad relationship. And the implication is why would you even want to know about a Heavenly Father if your earthly father has disappointed or hurt you because he's only going to be worse. He's going to be like an amplified earthly father in their thinking. And so I had a very difficult relationship with my dad. My dad looked at me on the eve of my high school graduation and said, "I don't have enough love for you to fill my little finger."

Dr. James Dobson: Did he really?

Lee Strobel: Yeah. It was in an argument, and we were both saying things we later regretted. I was an unwanted pregnancy from his perspective, and so we never had a good relationship. And I think that was one of the reasons I moved toward atheism in my life. In fact, there was a study done, a multi-generational study published by Oxford, where they looked at the impact of fathers on the religious perspective of their children. And interestingly, one of the things they found is, if you are a father who prays, if you are a father who goes to church, if you are a father who reads the Bible, you probably will not lead your children to faith if you are a cold father, an emotionally distant father. That seems to be the element. It is that sense of love and acceptance and warmth that tends to be the connector. And when young people see that and experience that, they can see that there must be a Heavenly Father who's like that too.

So, it's not just going through the religious rituals of Christianity that impresses a child, it is when we pull them up in our lap and give them a hug and tell them, we love them, and so forth. So I think that's sobering for a lot of dads to realize. But here's what C. S. Lewis said that I think was interesting. None of us has perfect dad, so we're all kind of in that boat of like, uh-oh, if they're going to

look at me, who am I? But C. S. Lewis said something. He said, "All of us have imperfect fathers, but we can all imagine what would a perfect father be like?"

Well, he'd be loving. He'd be accepting. He'd be a cheerleader. He'd be an encourager. He would be gracious. And you think of all the things that would be true of a perfect father. And then you say, now, got that picture in your mind? That's God. So we can all imagine what that would be like, despite what our earthly circumstances are. So, there's hope even for single moms who are facing and saying, "Well, what do I do? How do I reach my child if they're in a deficit now because they don't have a father who's there, who's warm and affectionate and loving to them?" No, we can still reach our children. And one of the ways is to help them see that we're all flawed as human beings, but there is a perfect father and we can know Him.

Dr. James Dobson: There's somebody out there who has no idea what we're talking about. It sounds so good, but they've never heard it before and it doesn't make sense, and they've got to have more evidence than that. Would you talk to the person out there who's heard us today in a different way. They've heard their pastors, perhaps there's some Christian somewhere trying to tell them who God is and who Christ is, but it would help if you would add to that understanding.

Lee Strobel: Yeah. I'd love to. You may have had a father who was flawed. We all have flawed fathers. We're all sinners, we've all fallen short of God's glory. We all make mistakes. We're not perfect role models as fathers. But can't you imagine what a perfect father would be like? Can't you imagine the love you would feel? Can't you imagine the encouragement, the affection, the grace? Can't you just think about that, what that would be like to have a father like that, who cheers you on who, who says you are mine and I love you, and I'm behind you, and I am for you? Friends, that is your Heavenly Father. He is real. He is there. He is available. He is knowable. You can have a relationship with him starting at this moment. How do you do that? You connect with Him, you just say. In fact, right now, just in your heart, God will hear you in your heart.

Father, I need the kind of love that only you can provide. I need the kind of encouragement and grace that only you offer. I'm not a perfect person, I've messed up, I admit that. And I want to turn from that. And I want to receive your free gift of forgiveness and eternal life that your son purchased for me when He died in the cross as my substitute to pay for my sin. Thank you, Father, for loving me so much that you can't stand the thought of eternity without me and you together. Thank you for your love, for your grace. Help me, Father, to live the kind of life that you want me to live because from this moment on, I am yours.

Dr. James Dobson: What a beautiful prayer. And if you'll stay right where you are, we will talk about this-

Lee Strobel: Sure, love to.

Dr. James Dobson: ... on what will be the next program. Will you be with us?

Lee Strobel: Excellent. Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: I love you, Lee.

Lee Strobel: You too.

Roger Marsh: You've been listening to Family Talk and that was the first half of a conversation between Dr. Dobson and bestselling author and apologist Lee Strobel. Today, Lee shared his incredible testimony of finding Christ. On tomorrow's broadcast, he and Dr. Dobson will discuss his book, *The Case for Miracles*. Lee Strobel is such an incredible storyteller and a brilliant apologist, you will not want to miss tomorrow's program.

Now to learn more about Lee Strobel, his books, and his ministry, visit us online at [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). Since the interview was recorded, Lee Strobel has since joined Colorado Christian University as the founding director of the Lee Strobel Center for Evangelism and Applied Apologetics. The Strobel Center offers 100% online bachelor's and master's degrees as well as non-credit continuing ed courses in evangelism and apologetics. You will find more information about the Strobel Center on our website as well. Go to [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk) to find that info there.

Now, let me ask you a question. Answer as honestly as you can. Are you a kind person? Do you consider yourself to be a kind person? Okay. Now, is there anyone in your life that you would like to have a better relationship with? Well, for the entire month of July, the JDFI is partnering with best-selling author, Shaunti Feldhahn to provide Shaunti's popular 30-day kindness challenge to our listeners. For 30 days straight, you will practice real practical kindness toward that one person with whom you'd like to improve your relationship. Shaunti's research has found that 89% of relationships improve as a result of the kindness challenge. And it is completely free to participate. You can start anytime this month, but why not do so right now. Go to [drjamesdobson.org/kindnesschallenge](http://drjamesdobson.org/kindnesschallenge) to get the ball rolling.

When you sign up, you'll receive an email with all the details about the challenge. And then for 30 days in a row, you'll receive daily emails with tips and advice for how you can become more kind and improve your relationships. Sign up for the 30-day kindness challenge today when you go to [drjamesdobson.org/](http://drjamesdobson.org/) the word kindness and the word challenge.

I'm Roger Marsh, thanks so much for joining us for Family Talk today. And be sure to listen again tomorrow to hear the powerful and thought-provoking conclusion of Dr. Dobson's conversation with Lee Strobel that we're calling "The Case for Miracles: The Supernatural in the 21st Century." Until then, keep the

faith and continue to stand up for righteousness, and 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.