



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: How the Church Can Reach the Millennial Generation – Part 2

Guest(s): Jonathan Teague

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Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a 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: The millennial generation has been portrayed very poorly in popular culture. They're viewed as selfish, lazy, irresponsible, unpatriotic, and even hostile toward religion. Now, those characteristics don't apply to everyone of course, but there is a majority who do think and act that way. So what is the church's responsibility to reach these young people? How can we effectively and purposefully minister to them? You've tuned to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh with your host, psychologist and best-selling author, Dr. James Dobson. Today on the program, we're going to continue a fascinating discussion Dr. Dobson had on this topic with Pastor Jonathan Teague. Jonathan is the minister to married adults at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas. Last time on the broadcast, Pastor Teague and Dr. Dobson explored the troubled worldview that many millennials hold. In a moment, they'll address the concept of absolute truth and how mature believers can disciple younger ones. There's a lot of content to get to, so let's get started, shall we? Here now is Dr. James Dobson on this edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Pastor Teague, in this conversation we are picking up where I left off on a previous broadcast with George Barna, who's done social research from a Christian perspective and he studied millennials carefully. You've probably read his books on that subject, and one of the things that he said that I can't get away from and that there's only 4%, according to his studies of millennials, believe in absolute truth. Have you found that in your work with millennials?

Jonathan Teague: I think the way you put that at the end, Dr. Dobson is probably the best synopsis and the best way to say it. It's never a good idea to disagree with Barna and his research, but I think how comprehensive they were in that analysis is what's so helpful, and I think the semantics, the definition of the terms there is what's important. It's this idea that although truth is in the mind and the heart of so many millennials that I've known, the question is who gets to define it? Is it defined by the Scripture? Is it defined by the work of Jesus on the cross? Is that what defines my construct for truth, or is it me? Do I get to draw the lines of demarcation? Do I get to create the plumb line of what is and is not true?

Dr. James Dobson: How arrogant is that? To say, I get to set the rules for the universe. I'm the one that decides, it doesn't matter what the creator said or what we read about Him in the Scripture or Jesus coming to provide a remedy for sin, I can do it myself.

Jonathan Teague: Right, right.

Dr. James Dobson: That is a dead end street that leads to a disaster.

Jonathan Teague: Well, it does, and think of the implications there, and I think you would probably agree this is... There's not any one generation that might necessarily struggle with this reality, but I think it is highlighted amongst so many young adults where if it's not going to be the Scripture and it's not going to be Jesus from where I draw my truth for my marriage, my parenting, my work life, what I do with my money, my time, personal purity, whatever it may be, once I decide that I'm not going to look to that resource for truth and life and hope, which ironically is what Jesus describes himself to be in John 14. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." In the original language of the Bible, those are all singular. Those are all singular modifiers. There's only one, one way truth's in life.

Dr. James Dobson: That's right.

Jonathan Teague: Jesus is giving us an exclusive pathway towards truth Himself, and what I try to say to young adults when I'm discipling them is, "Isn't that great? Isn't that great that God doesn't offer you a multiplicity of ways to know Him?" There's only one and it God's done the work for you. You don't have to pursue your own pathways of knowledge and truth and figuring out self-discovery as a means to understand who God is or what truth is. You can put your faith and hope and trust in Jesus Christ and the simplicity of the gospel and the straightforwardness of following Jesus. I think God's actually done the legwork for this generation and the trouble is when we try to pursue our own means of discovering and defining truth, I think you're right. That's where problems abound and there's no peace in that. There's no joy in that. There's no life in that.

Dr. James Dobson: Because you haven't answered the ontological questions. You can't answer them for yourself. The questions involving reality, who am I?

Jonathan Teague: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: Why am I here? Who put me here? What does He expect me to do? Is there absolute truth? Is there life after death? If you don't have an answer to those things, you are lost. You're trying to figure it out for yourself and there are no answers. No other religion on the face of the earth deals with those questions.

Jonathan Teague: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: And the Christians got them right in front of him unless he foolishly thinks, I don't care about all that. I've got my own plan and my own ideas, and that leads to Hell in my view.

Jonathan Teague: Well, it does. I think the Scripture reinforces that when it says, "And ye support him and a man wants to die, and then the judgment." My pastor, Dr. Graham, he faithfully has been preaching that for-

Dr. James Dobson: He preaches it. I hear he hear him a lot.

Jonathan Teague: ... Years and years. Oh yeah, and he's passionate about people understanding that there's a real place called Hell and a real place called Heaven.

Dr. James Dobson: You believe that?

Jonathan Teague: Of course. Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: Do the people you talk to in your classes at church know that?

Jonathan Teague: I think the ones that grew up in church, and this is where we begin to segment this generation a little bit, I think you have kids like me. I was raised in a pastor's home. My mom and dad pointing me to Jesus at an early age and very much it was a high priority for them that I understand what it means to follow Christ on my own.

Dr. James Dobson: You were called to the ministry when you were 16.

Jonathan Teague: I was.

Dr. James Dobson: So you were well grounded.

Jonathan Teague: I was. My wife grew up in the same kind of home. Her parents are wonderful, amazing, godly people, raised her and her brother to know and love the Lord, the same for me and my sisters. So at some point I recognized, in fact, I just got done preaching at our kids camp this past weekend and one of my daughters was there and I made this statement. I said, "Boys and girls, there comes a point when you've got to decide what are you going to do with Jesus? And your mom and dad can't do it for you, and a pastor can't do it for you, it's a personal decision." And my folks and my wife's parents, they raised us to understand that, and so that's how we're raising our children and the idea of faith being personal, I think for so many young adults, they're very spiritual. This is what's encouraging about young adults. Spiritualism is on the rise, so the idea that there is a God and He might be interested in my life, that's not an unknown thing amongst so many young adults.

Dr. James Dobson: Do they believe that, that God knows me by name apart from everybody else?

Jonathan Teague: Some do. I think where we get into them... Where we get in trouble with some of young adults that I've spoken with is when they begin to qualify who that God is, and what He does, and what His characteristics are, and then that-

Dr. James Dobson: It's a shame they don't just read the Word.

Jonathan Teague: So-

Dr. James Dobson: I think He tells us who He is.

Jonathan Teague: That's right. And so biblical literacy becomes such an important factor in all of this, pointing people to the Scripture and helping them understand how to read it, and what it says and how it can be such an important guide for your life, and it's the very word of God. I think for a young adult, not that they would discard or discount that there is a God, but questions of how do I know Him, and what does He want from me? How does this relationship work? That's where it gets very complicated and complex for a lot of young folks.

Dr. James Dobson: When you're preaching to that age group, would they believe you if you said, "Listen to me, there's some things I know and what I'm going to tell you is not my perspective on life. What I'm telling you is truth. There's some things that are absolutely right and some that are wrong, and one of them is that you are faced with a choice of whether you are going to accept Jesus Christ and His love in your life, His direction and His commandments, and live by them or you are not, and if you're not, you will be lost in this life." And can you say that and not have them say, "Who are you to tell me?"

Jonathan Teague: Well, I suppose after doing this for a little while, you kind of get to a point where you really don't worry about if they get upset about it or not, but you're right. There is that reflex amongst many young adults where that for them, they might feel that as a very dogmatic way of describing life and they would point back to, well, yeah, wait a minute. I mean, what credibility do you have to say that to me? I actually think that young adults gravitate to someone who's not willing to compromise, or homogenize, or water down the message of Christ.

Dr. James Dobson: Jonathan, I believe that with everything that's within me, that when you preach that message in the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit as your pastor, Jack Graham does, that there is comfort in that. When somebody stands up and says, "The Scripture is valid and accurate for our lives on a day by day basis, and you can believe this, and you better believe this because it is not an option. It is what God gives to us as an imperative."

Jonathan Teague: Well, I think that's a perfect on-ramp to really see how faithful preaching and teaching in the church corresponds and correlates to disciple making because I think the moment that that pastor or teacher gets off the platform and steps away from the podium, every millennial in that room that heard that, is watching, and they're looking and they're listening and they're going to watch

how I treat Michelle three or four hours later, they're going to see what I'm doing on social media. They're going to look at, see how I parent my kids at the store, but the idea that you can just simply sort of coexist and say things or kind of pronounce things but not live them. You talked earlier about that hypocrisy, so many millennials have so much skepticism around the institution of church. Again, not so much Jesus, but the people that proclaim him.

Dr. James Dobson: I taught the same age group that you're teaching. I taught a young married class for 10 years, and what I said in response to this is, "Yes, I want to stand in front of you with integrity and live up to the standard. I'm preaching, but I'm telling you something, if I fail, that doesn't change anything."

Jonathan Teague: It doesn't change the message. That's right. Doesn't change the truth of the message. And that's where that's so good and we've got to continue to unpack for young adults and deconstruct, if there's mythology around them who they are. I think it's our responsibility as spiritual leaders to sort of take the mythology out of following Christ and make it this less mystical, unknown, cathartic idea and realize that there's a simplicity to following Jesus.

Now, that's not to say that the Christian life's not hard and that we won't suffer. That's a whole nother discussion about-

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, it sure is.

Jonathan Teague: ... So many struggles that people have to want to dive all the way in to that Mark chapter 8, suffering that Jesus says, "Deny yourself, carry your cross, follow me." So many people. That's not attractive to them, but I think I really believe that there is a remnant of young adults that did know the church growing up, and statistics are telling us that a lot of them are going away, but some are coming back, particularly is when they have kids and as they come back, I think there is a desire for someone who's lived a life of credibility and faithfulness, not a perfect life, but a life where they've sought to walk well with Jesus.

I think that there is a remnant of young adults who they want to get around folks who've lived well for the Lord and are saying, "show me how to do this." I think there's young adults that say, "If I can find a godly man and woman whose marriage has lasted 30, 40, 50 years, that gives me some hope that maybe mine can too. Maybe if I can find people who have lived with integrity in their business life, well, maybe I can too." I think this idea that Paul gives Titus in Titus 2:2, "To gather the older men with the younger men and the older women with the younger women." What a beautiful biblical picture and that word old, there doesn't always have to mean age, but it definitely means maturity. It means long faithfulness. And I think when you start to get folks intergenerationally together, I think there's so much life that comes from that where the message becomes illuminated through the lives of the people that are faithfully living in, and I think that's where we can win and make a lot of headway in our discipling relationships with young adults.

Dr. James Dobson: Going back in history, church history to the days of Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" and so on, and the other great preachers of that age got to the younger generation. There was such sin and depravity in that time. It was disgusting from what I've read about it, and it was not the older generation that began to realize that, it was the younger generation. I hope I live long enough to see the millennials recognize that there's truth here. There's something that has meaning for me.

Jonathan Teague: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: God does know me. He does love me, and He is calling me to a higher standard, and all of the joys of this world and the immorality, and the drugs, and the things that seem to give pleasure are empty and they lead to death. That's what the Scripture says.

Jonathan Teague: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: With repentance. I want to get on my face before God and ask Him to forgive me. That message is so strong, Jonathan, that I know it will preach today. I hope to see a day when that will occur again and that it will start with what we call the kids.

Jonathan Teague: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: I understand.

Jonathan Teague: Well, I agree with you and I think one of the things that I try to instill in the young men that I disciple, I've got four in my life right now that I try to spend an hour or so as close to every week together as we can, and I do that frankly, because people did that for me. I had a godly dad who's now in Heaven, but who loved me, and prayed with me, and pointed me to Jesus, and I've had other godly men, men that you and I have talked about, Dr. Graham, Dr. Kenneth Cooper, wonderful godly men, many who I could name right now. They're coming in the front of my heart who-

Dr. James Dobson: I bet I know most of them.

Jonathan Teague: You do. And then they've taken time to personally pour into me, and point me, and show me things in their life where the work of Christ and the gospel has made the fundamental difference. I think when we can point young adults certainly to a God that does judge sin, but praise the Lord. How did He judge it? He judged it by putting it on His son. And when Jesus went to the cross and took my sin when I was still a sinner, Christ died for me and the power of the love of Jesus that He would do that for me. And when Paul says that, "Christ came to die for sinners." In 1 Timothy, "And I'm the chief." Paul understood, he knew what Jesus had done for him. And I think that's the power-

Dr. James Dobson: Did your dad teach you the difference between right and wrong-

Jonathan Teague: He certainly did.

Dr. James Dobson: From an early age?

Jonathan Teague: He certainly did. Yes, sir.

Dr. James Dobson: I was thinking just a few days ago and when the experience I had when I was a senior in high school and I cared a lot about tennis, I played 11 months out of the year and one of those tournaments was held in Harlingen, Texas. You know where that is?

Jonathan Teague: Yes, sir.

Dr. James Dobson: And I entered this tournament and at the end of Saturday night, I was still in the tournament and we come to Sunday. So what was I going to do? I went to church on Sunday and my dad came to me and he didn't scold me. He didn't demand anything at of me. He just said, "Jim, I've been thinking about this. I know you want to finish this tournament and continue to play, but I don't think it's right because Sunday is a holy day, but I would like you to think about it and even pray about it."

That's all he said. And I thought about that and I went to the tournament director and I said, "I'm sorry, I'm not going to be able to continue." And he said, "Why?" And I said, "Well, I go to church on Sunday." And that tournament director said later that he thought about that and was sure there are many other boys playing in that tournament that wanted to go to church too. So he held over the tournament till Monday.

Jonathan Teague: Wow.

Dr. James Dobson: And I was able to continue, but I learned a lesson from that. That's the difference between right and wrong.

Jonathan Teague: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: Not that playing on Sunday is a cardinal sin, but there was a principal there that my father was teaching me and I got it. You do the same thing?

Jonathan Teague: We have just decided as a family that we're going to be in church on Sunday, not just because I'm in ministry, but because that's I think. So-

Dr. James Dobson: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

Jonathan Teague: Of course. And it's so critical to point our kids to the fact that, that is the standard of our home is Christ and Christlikeness. And I just believe that if we

will continue to raise the awareness of God-honoring Bible believing folks in our churches, particularly folks who've walked with the Lord for a long time and say, "Look, there is a generation that's coming and they might just be willing to trust in this Jesus, you say you live by."

Dr. James Dobson: I wouldn't give up on them.

Jonathan Teague: Don't give up on them.

Dr. James Dobson: In fact, that's why you're doing what you're doing, isn't it?

Jonathan Teague: Yes, sir. That's right. One of the classes I teach on a Sunday morning is folks in their sixties and seventies and they hear me say all the time, "Listen, there's no retirement age in the kingdom. You have an opportunity to take the life that you've lived and the things that you've learned and you can give back. You can pour your life back into people who you might think don't want to hear from you, but actually I think they do. And I think they're looking for credible Christ followers who've lived their lives and loved the Lord well, and it's made all the difference in their life." I like to say it this way, "When you're willing to enter into community with young adults, do life with them." "Hey, I'll babysit your kids so y'all can go on a date. Hey, we'll start a new small group in our church and we'll give marriage advice as we go." "When you start to build community, that's when you earn the right to be a spiritual authority in their life."

Dr. James Dobson: I'm telling you, you do that and kids will come.

Jonathan Teague: I think so.

Dr. James Dobson: They will follow.

Jonathan Teague: I think so.

Dr. James Dobson: Because they need that. They want that.

Jonathan Teague: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: They want something worth dying for. Not just pleasure. Church has fun things, baseball and so on. There's nothing wrong with that, but they want more than that. They want something worth living and dying for.

Jonathan Teague: And the millennials-

Dr. James Dobson: We must give it to them.

Jonathan Teague: Well, you're right, and the millennials are the cause generation. They want to change the world and bring justice and make things right. But the problem is, if you're not guided by a compass of truth, if you're not guided by a biblical

worldview, you're really not going to hope change a whole lot. And so I love meeting passionate, and vigorous, and zealous millennials that want to make the world a better place. And what I love it is when they meet Jesus and they enter a relationship with Him and they find out how you can actually substantively do that through your faith and through a walk with Christ, and it's not just making things better or more moral, it's about seeing people's lives changed and as subsequently their eternities change forever because of a walk with Christ. I think community gives you authority and authority is where we can see transformation and when we see life change, what'll happen is a faithful generation of people who built wonderful churches and pastored and served and loved well, when they head to Heaven, they can look back over their shoulder and they can see that there is a generation coming behind that just like in Joshua, when they say, "Come back to the river, look back at these stones. Don't forget what God did."

The problem for so many millennials is they've never walked on dry ground. They would say they've never seen the water's part. They've never experienced it. So they don't know they need a generation of God-loving people. Jesus following people to say, "God did this here." Psalm 145, "One generation, pass it on to the next." And I think that's where transformation can come.

Dr. James Dobson: Jonathan, have you ever witnessed a revival spirit when the Holy Spirit descended upon a crowd and everybody there knew it and felt it? I'm not talking about some emotional foolishness. I'm talking about a moment when there really was an encounter with God within that service and people were seeking the forgiveness of sin and a relationship with Jesus Christ. Have you witnessed that?

Jonathan Teague: I would say there were two times in my life in the summer of 2010 that come to mind. One personally, when I was in the Holy Land and as you know, just a wonderful place to be. And so much, not only rich history, but I just think there's just so much that that can be seen there. The Scriptures come alive when you're there. And I remember standing on the Sea of Galilee and looking out, and I just remember the Lord really pressing hard on me about some things for my life and for my future, and I just couldn't shake it. When it was over and I happened to be with my dad there and we talked about it and prayed about it and had a chance. We have a little tree there in the Garden of Gethsemane, I know many people do where we prayed together.

And then another time that summer, I remember being in a service with teenagers and I just know the spirit of the Lord was moving. And I think how you put that was so helpful, not just because it's emotional and not just because people are weeping over a lost friend or family member, although that was happening, but there was just a deep sense of we don't want to leave this room. The Lord's moving and we're going to worship, and we're going to be under preaching and we're going to follow what the Lord does. So it's a beautiful thing when that happened, when those moments come.

Dr. James Dobson: Thank you again for coming and being with us and having an opportunity to talk about these foundational concepts. They really are the source of all righteousness and a culture, and we must embrace it.

Jonathan Teague: Amen.

Dr. James Dobson: And you're trying to do that.

Jonathan Teague: We are. Pray for us. We thank you for your ministry.

Dr. James Dobson: We've been talking to Pastor Jonathan Teague, minister to married adults at Preston Wood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas, where Dr. Jack Graham is a senior pastor and a great friend of mine. This has been a wonderful conversation. I've enjoyed it. I hope the Lord is pleased. We really prayed before we went on the air that the Lord would bless what we're doing today, and thank you for being part of it. Give my regards to Dr. and Mrs. Graham and to your wife, Michelle, and hope to see you again soon.

Jonathan Teague: Well, it's an honor, Dr. Dobson, thank you for allowing me to share this time with you today. Appreciate you very much.

Dr. James Dobson: Blessing to you.

Roger Marsh: The millennial generation is definitely lost in this confusing and dangerous culture, and the more mature believers in every church must prioritize teaching and guiding young people with biblical truth. I'm Roger Marsh, and I pray that over the past couple of days here on Family Talk that you've learned something and found these conversations to be of benefit to you. Dr. Dobson's special guest these past couple of days here on Family Talk has been senior associate pastor Jonathan Teague from Prestonwood Baptist Church. Go to today's broadcast page and you can connect with Pastor Teague on social media or read his informative blog. Go to drjamesdobson.org and then click onto the broadcast button at the top of the page. That's drjamesdobson.org. Well, that's all the time we have for today. I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks for listening.

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

Dr. James Dobson: When I was in college, I ran a long distance race that I will never forget. I didn't win it, but I learned a valuable lesson about myself and about marriage.

Roger Marsh: Dr. James Dobson for Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: It was my freshman year and I really wanted to win my first race badly. Although I hadn't trained properly, I bounded onto the track full of energy and optimism. At the sound of the starting gun, I tore off as fast as I could run and I left the pack far behind. By the second lap however, my side was splitting and the pack was closing in behind me. Somewhere near the halfway mark I was sucking air

frantically and my chest was heaving like a great grey whale. I soon collapsed on the in-field grass in a sweating heap of failure losing the race and my pride in one great disaster. But I did learn a lesson that has stuck with me to this day. Marathons are very different from sprints and you have to learn to pace yourself if you're going to endure to the finish line. And isn't that true of married life too? You have to set a pace that you can maintain through all the ups and downs of everyday living and make up your mind to let nothing knock you off the track. It's called life-long marriage and it sure beats an early collapse on the in-field grass.

Roger Marsh:

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