



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Mama Bear Apologetics

Guest(s): Hillary Morgan Ferrer

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Jackie: Hi. I'm Jackie from Office of the President.

Adlay: Hi. I'm Adlay from the Office of the President.

Brad: Hi. I'm Brad from Office of the President.

Dave: And I'm Dave from Office of the President.

Jackie: From all of us at the James Dobson Family Institute ...

Group: Merry Christmas!

Roger Marsh: Welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. We hope that you and your family are excited for Christmas the way we are. Can't help but think of family during the holidays this time of year. You may ask yourself, "How have I been doing as a parent, as a husband or wife, or even as a friend?" Well, today we will listen to a conversation that our own Dr. Tim Clinton had with his guest, Hillary Morgan Ferrer. She's a public speaker, author, and a highly regarded Christian apologist. Hillary has a passion for helping families, especially moms, to lift up their kids to develop a stronger connection to their faith. Dr. Clinton will tell you a little bit more about her in just a moment.

First though, I just want to mention that all through the month of December, we have a matching grant in place here at the Ministry. This grant comes from some very special friends of ours. This means your gift of any size will be doubled. That's right! Twice the impact to help us reach more people with encouragement and valuable resources. Won't you help us to begin the new year with momentum? Your generosity will provide hope and encouragement to even more families in 2023. If you'd like to donate, please visit drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org, or call us at 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Today's program is from our 2022 Best of Broadcast Collection and was recorded and originally aired earlier this year. Now, let's listen to Dr. Tim Clinton and today's guest, Hillary Morgan Ferrer.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host here at Family Talk and President of the

American Association of Christian Counselors. Mom, Dad, do you often worry about your kids? More specifically, do you worry about your kids' faith? Whether they'll grow up and continue to believe in God, whether they'll adhere to the tenets of the Christian faith that you love and hold dear. According to the Barna Research Group, 59% of youth leave church after they graduate. That statistic, so alarming. But it begs the question: How can we help our children cultivate a faith of their own and foster a relationship with the one true God of our Christian faith? Our guest today here on Family Talk has set out to help moms and dads answer that very question. Her name? Hillary Morgan Ferrer. She's on a mission to provide accessible apologetics to busy moms.

As a part of that mission, Hillary founded Mama Bear Apologetics, a ministry for which she serves as the CEO. We're going to be talking about *Mama Bear Apologetics* on today's edition of Family Talk. Hillary has her master's degree in biology from Clemson University and is working on a master's degree in apologetics from Biola University. She loves helping moms to discern both truth and lies in science and culture, and she also specializes in understanding the root causes of doubt. Hillary is the chief author and editor of the bestselling books *Mama Bear Apologetics: Empowering Your Kids to Challenge Cultural Lies*, *Mama Bear Apologetics Guide to Sexuality: Empowering Your Kids to Understand and Live Out God's Design*. Hillary and her husband, John ... They've been married 15 years, minister together as an apologetics team. Hillary, what a delight to have you. Thank you so much for joining us here on Family Talk.

Hillary Morgan Ferrer: Thank you so much for having me!

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hillary, the last couple of years have been pretty tough to say the least. Now, what's interesting to me, though, when you step back for a moment ... There's been a real battle going on with our kids. I think of mental health issues from the lockdowns and how everything changed at school, to just what they're going through. There's so much stress and anxiety. And then when you look at school settings, bullying and those digital devices, and sexualization. Indoctrination, if you will. Not education, indoctrination that's going on, challenging of the faith. Those things ... It's unbelievable what we're seeing right before our own eyes, even to the point of drag queen parties and stuff. And then you are hearing debate and comments like kids are the property of the school when they're at school and not home. You and I think we share a common thought here, as does Dr. Dobson. He's been preaching this all along. God has given the primary responsibility for spiritual education and this influence of kids to moms and dads, parents. That's what this is all about, right?

Hillary Morgan Ferrer: I can't remember who said it first, but kids spell love T-I-M-E.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah.

Hillary Morgan Ferrer: And so, you need to have that one-on-one relationship, even if it's as a mentor relationship with kids. Yeah, I've heard some of those same quotes about how when you enroll your kids in public school, they are now the property of the

state and that that's a little scary to be taking away parental responsibility and authority like that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: When you look at culture, also, you see a Mama Bear movement going on out there.

Hillary Morgan Ferrer: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I love the title of your book because we're going to win or lose this cultural battle that we're in, basically, one home at a time.

Hillary Morgan Ferrer: Absolutely.

Dr. Tim Clinton: When I think of your book, *Mama Bear Apologetics: Empowering Your Kids to Challenge Cultural Lies* ... Hillary, let's go straight to the heart of the book. It rests around a word called apologetics for a moment. And I want you to take us in and why that becomes center stage.

Hillary Morgan Ferrer: Yeah. So a lot of times people hear the word "apologetics" and their first question is, "What are you apologizing for? I'm not going to apologize for being a Christian." And that's, of course, not what it actually means. So the word "apologetics" comes from the Greek word "apologia," and it was used of the kind of early time in Greece, first and second century, the name that they used for lawyers. So lawyers aren't apologizing for anything. What they're doing is they're building a case. They're giving reasons why they think they're position is the one that is absolutely true, and they're trying to convince a jury that, "This is the truth. This is what happened". And so apologetics, when it comes to Christianity and Christian apologetics, is we're building a case for why do we believe what we believe.

I remember when I was first presented with apologetics, I was 12 years old and I had been a good Christian kid. I love the Lord. I wanted to be a missionary. I remember I wanted to give my life for the Lord. My pastor went through a couple series. He went through CS Lewis's Trilemma. Was Jesus a liar? Was He a lunatic or was He Lord? And as we know now, there's a fourth category where people would say, "Oh, it's just a legend." But going through and debunking these other ones that you can't have Jesus as a good teacher if he wasn't God and he didn't know he wasn't God, in which case he's crazy. Or if he knew he wasn't God, but he told everybody he was, in which case he's a liar. There's not a lot of options for Jesus. I think he started with that one, and then he went through the evidences for the resurrection. And every single week, he picked a different explanation that skeptics have given on what actually happened.

And at the end of the day, you are just left with, "That makes so much less sense than to have the resurrection happen." And then finally, he went through a series on the reliability of the New Testament documents. I mean, this series blew my little 12-year-old mind as I sat there and scribbled notes on it. Because

this meant to me that Christianity was no longer something that our family did, that was just something that I thought was true. It was something that I could engage with people on who maybe didn't believe in the Bible, who didn't believe in Jesus. And I could feel assured that, "No, I'm putting my faith in something that's reasonable and rational." In fact, that's what our pastor said so many times, from the pulpit, we believe in a reasonable, rational faith.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

This is really an alarming time and culture, and kids are always going to come back to us with questions. They're going to ask hard questions or they're going to watch you and see if you're congruent as a mom and dad living out your life before them, or at least living out what you say you believe. In the midst of it, the urgency here ... I wanted to get into this before we get into really the main content, and that is a lot of people are discussing this "exodus" of our youth. Saying when they get into their freshman year in college, or what have you, that there seems to be a shifting that takes place. And these kids are walking away from their relationship with God or their commitment to their faith, or going to church or what have you. Hillary, I wanted to ask you, and you did some research in here, but can you share with us what you found out about our kids, our Christian kids?

Hillary Morgan Ferrer:

Yeah, so it came from a variety of different sources. One of them was done by a guy named ... I believe Mike Napa was the one who had Christian kids who were at a Christian work program, which that sounds a little World War II-ish. But what he means is for their summer break, instead of going to a fun camp, they're going to a work camp, meaning they're going and they're serving in whatever community. So you would think these are the cream of the crop Christian kids, that if anybody's a strong Christian and knows what they believe, it would be these kids. Here's some of the statistics that came out of that. 41% were uncertain whether Jesus was physically resurrected. 41%! I mean if we look at 1 Corinthians 15, Paul says, "If Christ was not raised, then our preaching is in vain," and basically we're to be pitied as fools. So if you have 41% that aren't sure if Jesus was physically resurrected, I got to wonder why they're so committed to this religion.

63% didn't believe Jesus to be the son of the one true God. 33% believe that Jesus was not the only way to Heaven. And this is the one that really hurts my heart. 60% are uncertain, unsettled, or confused about whether the Bible can be trusted. If we can't trust the Bible, we have no way to know what God has really said to us and what He has revealed about Himself. I think I say in the first book that your willingness to put yourself out there and defend the Christian faith will only be as strong as your inner conviction that it's actually true. And so what we have is a bunch of kids who aren't really sure if it's true. And then they go on to college, and college can introduce them to all sorts of reasons why they shouldn't believe it's true. And then we're shock-shock-shocked when they walk away and come home and say, "Ahh, I'm an atheist now," or, "I'm an agnostic," or, "I don't believe in that anymore," or the popular kind of almost social contagion right now, "I'm deconstructing my faith."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. I took a quote from your book, *Mama Bear Apologetics*. It says, "The greatest protection we can give to our kids is to equip them to face the cultural lies head on while remaining, gracious, loving, and winsome," and I'm coming back. And what you're wanting to do and what you give to us, which is really a gift, this is a gift to Mom. It's, "Mom, listen. I want to help you be prepared to have an answer for that hope that lies deep within you. That love you have for Jesus, giving that in a special way so your kids, when they're getting pounded, they're anchored or they're rooted." In the book, you say, "What's important here isn't to 'give answers,' but rather to teach them to think biblically." Explain that to us because in higher education, we talk about helping students think critically. Hillary, can you merge that together for us?

Hillary Morgan Ferrer: The beautiful thing about the Christian worldview is it's like a puzzle where all the pieces fit together. We can make sense of the good things that are in the world: family and friends and fellowship. We can make sense of the bad things that are in the world. The parts that are broken, the diseases, the mental illness, we can make sense of that. We can make sense of this fact that we have this longing for a love that lasts eternally. I mean, watch every single Hallmark movie and they're all like, "I'm finding my eternal love." Where did we get this idea from? So it's taking all these little pieces of reality and saying, "How does this make sense?" Well, that kind of love makes sense when you put it in light of eternity. The sickness and disease makes sense when you put it in light of what sin did to the physical world because there's a spiritual ramification of sin, but there's a physical earthly ramification of sin.

I think of just all the different passages where it talks about the Earth groaning and crying out. And in fact, when the Israelites are going into the land, it says, "The Earth spit them out," and the Lord's saying, "Watch out that you don't keep doing this stuff where the Earth will spit you out just like it did the people before you." There's a physical aspect of sin, and all of these things make sense when you work them together and you understand the Christian worldview to where people can make sense of reality. So teaching our kids not just what the biblical worldview is ... the idea of creation, fall and redemption ... but teaching them how to think with a biblical worldview, how to piece all these things together.

Okay. You can make sense of all of it by using the biblical worldview. And so if we can teach kids how to think biblically instead of what to think biblically, then you'll have kids that can basically be presented with almost any situation. And when you know how to think through it, you don't need to have a whole bunch of memorized answers. I used to teach biology and chemistry. And especially in chemistry, I told the kids, "If you can understand why this is happening, you don't have to memorize anything, especially the formulas. You never have to memorize a formula if you understand why this is going on and what is actually going on." And I would say it's the same for just answers to tough questions of the Christian faith.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You're listening to Family Talk, a division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host, here today with our special guest, Hillary Morgan Ferrer. Hillary is the founder of Mama Bear Apologetics. An amazing book out by our friends at Harvest House called *Mama Bear Apologetics: Empowering Your Kids to Challenge Cultural Lies*. Hillary, one of the words that I picked up on as I went through your book was the word "discerning." You want them to be discerning. We want our kids to be able to discern what they're up against because they're getting killed by everything.

Hillary Morgan Ferrer: Yeah, so I would say ... I can't remember who said this first ... but true discernment, it's not necessarily always a difference between what is good and what is bad, but what's true and what's almost true. Because a lot of times, we find that the most potent lies are wrapped in partial truths. So when we teach our kids how to discern, we have to teach them that basically everything you hear is going to probably be a combination of something that's partially true and partially false, except for the Bible. The Bible we can trust, but the Bible can still be twisted. That's what Satan did to Jesus in the wilderness. That's what Satan did to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It's actually a battle between Scripture here. He's not just trying to tempt by telling them to go do something blatantly sinful. He's using Scripture to say, "Hey, Scripture says you should do this."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah.

Hillary Morgan Ferrer: Do we know how to separate the good from the bad, the truth from the non-truth, accept the truth, and reject the non-truth? For the topics in the book, we go through something called the ROAR method, which stands for recognize the message, offer discernment, argue for a healthier approach, and then reinforce these ideas through discussion, discipleship, and prayer. And so this step on offering discernment is we're trying to see what is true about this worldview statement that's been made that we have just identified.

Usually, we can find someone with maybe they feel like they have pure motives or maybe they're seeing a problem that we should all be recognizing, or maybe they're just valuing something that we should all value. And if you just toss the whole thing aside and say, "Oh, that's a lie," they're going to look at all their partial truths and say, "This person is not objective because they won't grant me that these things are true." We have to train our kids to look for those bridges that they can build first when it comes to ideas. Obviously, this stage is going to happen when they're a little bit older. We want to be practicing this with them while they're younger.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah.

Hillary Morgan Ferrer: Figuring out what are the things that we can agree with on this statement. And then when we argue for a healthier approach, we say, "Those values, that problem that you identified, these things that we should be valuing ... How does the Bible actually address this and how does it address it better than the way

secular culture has addressed it?" That way, we can be standing together side by side, arm in arm, agreeing on the things that we need to agree with, but then saying, "I think Scripture actually has a better solution for this, but I care about what you're saying." And when we do that, we're teaching these kids how to be discerning and how to be winsome and how to be loving, and how to actually have productive conversations with their friends and family who may believe differently than they do.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. Mama Bear roar!

Hillary Morgan Ferrer: That's right!

Dr. Tim Clinton: But there's a strategy in there and I loved it because, Hillary, it seemed like a real gift for Mom. It was a tool. When she's stumped and these questions are coming from her kids, here's a way to step back, take a deep breath, and then come back without reacting all over the place. Come let us reason together.

Hillary Morgan Ferrer: Yes!

Dr. Tim Clinton: Help me work my way through this. And that's what you're doing with the ROAR strategy. I love that. I wanted to ask you because some people tend to have these kind of thoughts, Hillary, that, "Hey, those kids that you talked about walking away from the faith? The good news is that they're going to come back. They come back." Hillary, you didn't find that, did you?

Hillary Morgan Ferrer: No, no. The youth Exodus does not show that most of them ... Some of them are coming back. It's like they go off on their own and they experiment and just kind of look at other worldviews, but it really does depend. I find that some of the ones that are coming back are coming back because there's such a good nostalgia for them in the sense that they had such a good experience in church that it's nostalgic. It feels safe. It feels like childhood to them. And once they're ready to start their own families, they're going to come back to that. However, there's a lot of kids who did not have this wonderful, perfect, nostalgic experience in church. And if they don't have anything that really has teeth in it-

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hooks. They don't have any hooks. Yeah, they're in trouble.

Hillary Morgan Ferrer: Yeah! They have no reason to come back. And they're finding that a lot of times, it's unanswered questions. I have something that I say often that I say: Questions are good. This idea that people will sometimes treat questions like, "Oh, that's you doubting! You need to not do that." Questions are good. But with enough unanswered questions, that leads to doubt. And doubt, when left to solidify, becomes unbelief, which is really, really hard to reverse. Now, a lot of times parents come to us at this stage where their children finally say, "I don't believe," and they say, "Oh my gosh, what could I do?" It was actually several stages before then that their kids really walked away. Sometimes, it's a question where we don't know how to answer, and so we just kind of try to distract.

"Hey! Look, a Chuck E. Cheese," or "Hey, let's get a toy," or "Oh, let's put something on TV." You kind of distract from the questions, thinking, "Oh, they'll go away. They'll get shoved down. We'll deal with that later."

What happens after that, though, is when they get to a certain age, they have this list of questions that went unanswered in their back pocket. They don't have a history of examples of tough questions having tough answers. So they're getting out to the world. They either have some sort of trauma that really messes with them, or they find a sin that they really don't want to give up. And at this point, they're reaching into their back pocket and they pull out all those questions that were never answered before and they say, "See, this is the reason why I'm leaving," when it actually has nothing to do with those.

So I like to say for parents, we need to give our kids a history that they can look back on. That when I have a really tough question, there's really good answers for it. Because what that does is it gives them the ability to in the future. When they're faced with a really tough question, they say, "In the past, I've gotten really good answers. I bet you anything if I dig enough, I can find a good answer for this one as well." But then if they have absolutely zero history, if every question they ever asked really went unanswered, then more than likely they're going to say, "This question here probably doesn't have a good answer either," and then they don't even try to find an answer.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. There's this mindset, too, that maybe because ... And we know how important Awana and youth group and-

Hillary Morgan Ferrer: I'm an Awana kid!

Dr. Tim Clinton: Christian school and church and all that is, but there's a tendency to think that that's enough, and that our kids don't need to understand how to articulate a defense of their faith.

And the more they are able to think biblically and get their hands around this and then reason, the more free they become. And there's this mindset, too, Hillary, I think, that, "Well, they'll get apologetics in college or something." No. This stuff should start way back. And Mom and Dad, you're the curator here. And kids, by the way, are saying this, aren't they, Hillary? That Mom and Dad, parents, are the ones that we take our lead from. That's what we want. Kids need structure. Dr. Dobson has taught that forever-

Hillary Morgan Ferrer: Yes!

Dr. Tim Clinton: And so this is an opportunity. Hillary, you go to work in this book. You take pretty difficult subjects like self-helpism, naturalism, moral relativism, emotionalism, new spirituality, Marxism, feminism, progressive Christianity, and what you do ... And I saw how you not only unpack it, you use your ROAR

strategy on each one of them to help Mama Bears out there ... and Papa Bears, we'll add them in there ... influence the baby bears in a special way, right?

Hillary Morgan Ferrer: That's right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's what you're trying to do here.

Hillary Morgan Ferrer: Yeah. And like what you were saying, Awana and all those things are great, but I think of Proverbs 18:7. It says, "The first to speak seems right until someone cross-examines him." And so what we need to be doing is our kids say, "Oh, this all sounds right." We need to be cross-examining them. My pastor's wife used to say, "I don't want my kids hearing anything that they haven't heard in my kitchen first," and also just this idea of, "I don't want my kids to hear any objection that they don't hear from me first right before I kind of help them answer that objection. And when you have that, that's when have kids that are prepared to meet the world head on.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. Hillary, such a compelling conversation, really. And Mama Bears, you need to track this book down. *Mama Bear Apologetics: Empowering Your Kids to Challenge Cultural Lies*. Thank you so much for joining us.

Hillary Morgan Ferrer: Absolutely. Thank you.

Roger Marsh: I'm Roger Marsh, and you've been listening to Dr. Tim Clinton's inspiring conversation about faith with Hillary Morgan Ferrer on today's edition of Family Talk. Hillary is the president and founder of Mama Bear Apologetics. Her ministry has insightful and valuable resources for moms and dads who want to equip their children with the practical evidence and reasoning that undergird our faith. Now, to learn more about Hillary Morgan Ferrer, or the ministry of Mama Bear Apologetics, visit drjamesdobson.org. This program is included in our 2022 Best of Broadcast Collection. For a suggested \$50 donation, you can own the entire collection or give it as a gift to someone you love. And new this year, you can get this collection in a digital download version as well. To receive the download collection, visit drjamesdobson.org/bestof2022. The download order link is featured right there in bold. It's a hyperlink shaded in holiday green.

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