



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Being a Light in the Darkness – Part 2

Guest(s): Chuck Colson

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Announcer: Today on Family Talk.

Roger Marsh: Jesus encouraged his disciples to let their light so shine that the world might know the good news. This command especially applies to us today because of the lost and hopeless society that we live in.

Roger Marsh: Hello, everyone. Welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Family Talk, of course, is a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. And in just a moment we'll continue Dr. Dobson's timeless conversation with the late Chuck Colson.

Roger Marsh: Now in our last program, Chuck talked about his time in prison stemming from his role in the infamous Watergate scandal. However, out of that experience, Chuck became a Christian and devoted his life to ministering to those who are incarcerated.

Roger Marsh: Today, they will turn to Chuck's book, *The Body*, and discuss the church's role in effectively spreading the gospel. So without further delay, here once again is Dr. James Dobson and this special edition of Family Talk.

James Dobson: Our guest, if you haven't guessed that by this moment, is Chuck Colson, who is an attorney. He is formerly in the Nixon administration in the White House. He's been chairman of the board of the Prison Fellowship ministry since 1984. That ministry is now ministering to prisoners and their families around the world. Chuck, how many people are involved in Prison Fellowship?

Chuck Colson: Oh, there's hundreds of thousands. I mean, we had over 150,000 volunteers during the Angel Tree program. We have 46,000 volunteers full-time. We have 80 countries.

Chuck Colson: When I was in Korea last fall, listening to the testimonies from around the world, I was absolutely awestruck, not just by the incredible testimonies, but by the realization that I've had nothing to do with it. I mean, it's a movement of

God's spirit. It's not Chuck Colson, a celebrity goes to Ethiopia and start some ministry.

Chuck Colson: A fellow in a prison was converted in Ethiopia, in the prison. During five years in prison, he led 3,200 people to Christ. They built a church. The Marxist government is overthrown. And he now is ministering to the guards, 500 of whom have now come to Christ. And they built a church among the guards.

Chuck Colson: Now, you listen to a story like that and you realize this is God. I got a letter a few months ago, Jim, from the president of Zambia. He was just elected, the first freely elected president. They threw out the Marxist government. President Kaunda, who had been a terrible dictator, was out. And I got this wonderful warm letter from him, I had no idea why, just thanking me for Prison Fellowship and encouraging me and hoping I would do well.

Chuck Colson: Well, when I got to Korea, I discovered that the president had been a prisoner and in prison had been led to Christ by Prison Fellowship volunteers. And when he got out, his marriage was in trouble. And Prison Fellowship volunteers worked with him and his wife and got their marriage together. And now he's the president of the country. Will, needless to say-

James Dobson: Oh my.

Chuck Colson: He loves our ministry.

James Dobson: Isn't it fun when you realize you're just a little peanut in the-

Chuck Colson: Oh my, yes.

James Dobson: In the grand scheme of things?

Chuck Colson: The ministry started in the year that I got out of prison actually. We started working in the prisons in 1975. And then I became chairman and the others became president because it's a big job to run it.

James Dobson: Sure.

Chuck Colson: And my job is to go out and to preach and to write books and to now, thank you, go on the radio, Jim.

James Dobson: Well, you are writing books. And every time one comes off your pen, we ask you to come here and let us kind of premiere it. You've just written a book called *The Body: Being Light in Darkness*. We just got started talking about that at the end of the program last time.

James Dobson: This concerns the body of Christ, the church. This is a commentary on where the church is in society today and some of its problems, some of its potential. Just

begin with an overview, Chuck, and then I've got some specific questions I want to ask you.

Chuck Colson: Well, I would say this, that I think the prevailing ethos in our culture today is radical individualism: everybody taking care of themselves and looking out for themselves. To a certain degree, that has penetrated the Christian world, and we begin to think about Christianity as a solitary relationship between me and Jesus. I call it the gospel of Jesus in me.

Chuck Colson: But that's not Christianity. Christianity cannot be lived apart from the body. When Peter at that decisive moment in the New Testament, that pivotal moment in the New Testament, when Jesus turned to his disciples and said, "Who do men say that I am?" And Peter said, "Thou art the Christ." And Jesus turned to him and he did not say, "Blessed art thou, Peter. You're now born again, saved. Go home and live the abundant life." He said, "On this rock, I will build my church"-

James Dobson: "I will build my church."

Chuck Colson: "And the gates of hell will not stand against it." I argue in this book, which is kind of a radical thought in this individualistic era, that you cannot live the Christian life apart from the church, that you cannot experience ... I'll say this slowly because it's terribly important. You cannot experience the fullness of God's grace apart from the church. And therefore those of us who take a casual view of the church are profaning the establishment, the institution which God has supernaturally endowed for the redemption of mankind and for the witness of the kingdom to come.

James Dobson: I'm kind of embarrassed to say this is a fairly recent understanding of mine, is that the church is under incredible pressure today. Gary Bower and I talked about the civil war of values that's going on and that on one side you have the media, the entertainment industry, the Congress, the court system and the White House. You have the professions, the American Bar Association, your profession represented-

Chuck Colson: Please don't. Please don't hang that one around my neck.

James Dobson: Or mine, the American Psychological Association, all of these professions are all on the other side. On the side of traditional Christianity, there are only two. Only two centers of power: the church and the family.

Chuck Colson: That's exactly right.

James Dobson: Now we've known the family was struggling, the family is being assaulted, the family was threatened. But until recently, I haven't fully understood the degree to which the church is being assaulted by hell itself.

Chuck Colson: Well, it certainly is. And we have to recognize that we are in a cosmic struggle, that the crisis is truth. The issue is, is there truth? Remember what Jesus said? "I am the truth." And remember Pilate's disdainful question, because that's what we deal with every day in our culture today. What is truth? The issue is truth. Is there such a thing as absolute truth?

Chuck Colson: On the front lines of that cosmic struggle is the church of Jesus Christ. It is the one institution which can battle in our culture for truth. And in here in this book, I have several chapters devoted to what is the secular worldview, what is the Christian worldview, and then something which most people don't think about with the church, the phrase that Paul used in the New Testament when he once described the church as the pillar and support of the truth. That is not just something that is true, that is ultimate reality, which is found in Jesus Christ and all that flows from it.

Chuck Colson: So the church is on the front lines. And the church is being assaulted. The church is being beleaguered. The pastors need our support and our help. And the lay people need to get behind their pastor and realize they got to participate and make that church a living vital organism in their community.

James Dobson: The pastor is the focus of our concern. Now, I have the results of a survey here that I want to share with you. This came from a 1991 survey of pastors conducted by Fuller Institute, of church growth there in Pasadena, California. Listen to these statistics.

James Dobson: 70% of the pastors say they don't have anyone that they consider to be a close friend. 70%, not one close friend. This one just blows me away. 37% confessed having been involved in inappropriate sexual behavior with someone in their present church. 37% of the pastors have been sexually involved with with one of their parishioners in the present context. 40% reported a serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month. 70% say they have a lower self-image now than when they started. 90% said that they felt inadequately trained to cope with ministry demands.

Chuck Colson: Wow.

James Dobson: We could take the rest of the program. How can the church be strong if its leaders are going through this kind of chaos?

Chuck Colson: Well, we're cannibalizing our pastors because we expect everything from them. We expect them to make the church grow because that's the measure of success in the world today, isn't it, growth?

James Dobson: That's what it says.

Chuck Colson: We talk about growth in numbers. We should be talking about growth in spiritual depth and quality. Never confuse technique with truth.

James Dobson: Yeah.

Chuck Colson: Always, if you're preaching the Orthodox faith and then the church grows, you know it's a sign of God's blessing. If you're not, if you're growing because of technique, that's merely manmade.

James Dobson: Yeah.

Chuck Colson: And we should be, if you really want to have church growth, have it the way they had it in the New Testament. In the New Testament times, what happened? Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead. It said, "Fear came across the congregation." And then the church began to grow.

Chuck Colson: After Paul's preaching, the fear of God came upon the church and it began to grow. Can you imagine a church growth expert coming in today and telling a pastor the secret to your church growth would be preach on fear of God? Not a one.

Chuck Colson: And yet that's clearly in the Reformation era. Coram Deo was the rallying cry of the reformers. In the presence of God, the imminence of God. If we really treated the church as the holy body, we would see it grow for the right reasons, not because we have the right marketing techniques.

James Dobson: Talk about the pastorate, Chuck. Why are so many pastors struggling in this way?

Chuck Colson: Well, I think because the elders and deacons and governing boards and the lay leaders want that church to grow, they don't view it as the place where that pastor is there to serve them and equip them for works of service. And yet that's exactly what Paul wrote in Ephesians.

Chuck Colson: When a church lacks the proper sense of koinonia, a fellowship, a bonding together, the deepest, richest kind that we've known through the years when the church has been strong, a real sense of accountability and a real sense of discipline, then it always breaks down into power fights and factions.

Chuck Colson: We refuse to respect the pastor's authority. Now, I think the pastor has to have authority over that church, because he is the one ordained by God to speak to that congregation on God's behalf. He needs to be accountable to the church and held to account, but clearly that pastor needs authority.

Chuck Colson: In the church that I worship in now when I'm smart enough to be in Florida, the pastor, when he came, an excellent pastor, Dr. Hayes Wicker, when he came, he had a covenant of 25 points, and he wanted it agreed to between the members of the church and himself. And it's excellent because it spells out exactly what's expected. And that's what churches need to do.

Chuck Colson: We are tearing pastors apart in this country. And that's one of the things I deal with in this book. And it's shocking.

James Dobson: As it says here, 40% have had a serious conflict with a parishioner. That challenging of the pastor's authority is very typical. And yet I can hear someone saying back through these microphones, "You don't know my pastor. I mean, guy doesn't preach anything. It's just, it's watery soup. His leadership is bad"-

Chuck Colson: Well, and there's a way to do it. And that's to get the church governing board, whatever it is, and to sit down with the pastor and talk about where he needs help and lovingly try to see that he becomes what he is supposed to be: the shepherd who oversees the flock which was purchased with the blood of Christ, the church.

Chuck Colson: I mean, when we take a low view of the church, it's scandalous because it's that for which Christ gave himself up for the church. But we should lovingly confront him and deal with him so that he does become the one who equips us for battle in the world. That's primarily what his task is.

James Dobson: Deal with this sexual information here. 37% have had an illicit affair. When you think about it, I mean, we're seeing it, these guys are fallen on all sides. The most visible seem to go down the most frequently. What's behind that?

Chuck Colson: Well, I think it was Henry Kissinger who said power is an aphrodisiac. And I think one of the problems with the power trip that a lot of people get on when they get into the pulpit, or when they get into politics or anything else, is that one of the areas in which they are most quickly vulnerable is the sexual area. And the temptation is the greatest and the strongest.

Chuck Colson: And so, the only defense against that is what the apostle Paul said. I suspect he might've had similar problems. He was proud, strong, and we don't know what the thorn in the flesh was that has to be taken away, but he did say that "I die daily." And that gives you a pretty good hint. He had to die to himself daily to his lusts, his desires, his temptations, and most of all to his pride.

Chuck Colson: And when you put yourself in the proper context, realizing that every breath you take is a breath that is given to you moment to moment by the living God that you serve only at his pleasure, that your life is without meaning without him, that you are merely his servant, then that kind of puts you back in perspective, gets you off that power and pride kick, and eliminate some of that sexual temptation.

James Dobson: You talk in your book about the tendency of the church today to idolize its leaders, to put them on a pedestal-

Chuck Colson: Pedestal complex.

James Dobson: Yeah, yeah.

Chuck Colson: Well, see, that's exactly right. And then you've got the guy up on the pedestal complex. And all of a sudden he begins to believe the things you're saying about him and begins to have an inflated view of himself. And the sexual temptation is one that almost inescapably follows from that.

Chuck Colson: But one of the things I talk about in the book and feel very strongly about is the accountability that is necessary in the Christian life. I know you've done it, Jim, and I've done it. I've got certain members of my board and I tell them, "Doesn't matter what area of my life, it's open to you. You come in, you look at my books, you ask me questions." Wesley used to have a soul series of questions that he would ask other people in his circles. And the penetrating questions, Chuck Swindoll, I quote his in the book-

James Dobson: I saw that.

Chuck Colson: Excellent.

James Dobson: And name the four or five questions he asked. Can you list them?

Chuck Colson: Have you had an improper relationship-

James Dobson: Wait a minute. Explain it. He's asking this of his fellow staff members.

Chuck Colson: Yes, they sit around in a circle, and they have seven questions. And they ask one another these questions. They go down the list and it's all the obvious temptations, "Have you lied?" and sexual immorality. Have you done anything improper this week? They finally get to, the last one is "Have you just lied to me?"

Chuck Colson: But they hold one another to account in that way. And I think that is extremely important, because I don't trust myself. And I know how easily pride affected me once before in my life and could again at this moment or 20 minutes from now. And so I have a group that I hold myself totally accountable to. As a matter of fact, I will make no decision unless they unanimously agree with it. That's a major decision.

Chuck Colson: A couple of years ago there was a decision I wanted to make that was important to me. I went to them and they unanimously said no. And I didn't do it. And I'm sure that that's a check on my own baser impulses. I mean, I don't always know when I'm in the will of God. So you need people that help you stay that way.

James Dobson: Accountability is the only answer.

- Chuck Colson: The church, meaning the universal body of all those whom God has regenerated, is on the front lines because it is the church that is the called out people of God who are to make the witness of the kingdom to come.
- Chuck Colson: But then I define this very carefully in the book. There is also the church particular, and that's the local confessing congregation. And the importance of that is that's where we come together with total doctrinal agreement, where we administer the sacraments, where we preach the word and where we're equipped to service.
- Chuck Colson: Now, every church that is equipping its lay people to be ministers of the gospel in their community, to live as salt and light, is on the front lines, because we're not going to win the battle for the heart and mind of our culture by simply winning political battles. I think what's happened to us in recent years has demonstrated the utter futility of that. We're going to win it by one by one winning people over pleasingly to our point of view.
- Chuck Colson: We're never going to win the battle to stop the reckless, shocking murder of one and a half million unborn children every year so long as there are more votes among women who want to be pandered to for their so-called right to choose. And so, the live bodies who vote, to whom you can say, "I give you the right to choose," the right of choice is always going to win over the unborn children who can't vote. They're not going to win that.
- Chuck Colson: And you're not going to win it by political strategies. You're going to win it by the churches on the front line persuading their people how they can with a convincing apologetic, stress the dignity of life at every level, not just abortion, but euthanasia as well, to their neighbors, and win the neighborhoods. The battle for the culture is going to be fought in the neighborhoods block to block. And that's where the church is on the front lines. That's where a church equipping its people is on the front lines-
- James Dobson: The best example of the church on the front lines is the role of the church in the fall of communism. You talk about that a lot in your book. That's an exciting story.
- Chuck Colson: I have one story I have to tell because it's just so powerful. It's the story of Timisoara, Romania, where Laszlo Tokes reformed church. He started to preach the gospel, and this was in 1988, and he soon had 5,000 members in his church. And the church was just vibrant and alive, and the secret police couldn't stand that kind of growth. And so they started to beat him and persecute him, tried to kill him. And eventually in the fall of 1989, when communism began to fall in Eastern Europe, the secret police came and they surrounded his church.
- Chuck Colson: And Laszlo Tokes said it was a turning point of his life because he looked out the windows and saw the tanks and the secret police. But he also saw the people of his community, of every church, Orthodox, Catholic, Baptist, Presbyterian,

Romanians, Hungarians surrounding that church. And they stood between him and the secret police to protect their pastor. He said it changed his life because all of his old prejudices faded away because he saw that all the people of God were there, the body.

Chuck Colson: Into that crowd one night came a young Baptist lad, 19 years old, his name was Daniel Gavra. Daniel Gavra walked up to his pastor, Peter Dugulescu, and had something under his coat. And Peter said, "Oh, don't bring a weapon in here." And young Daniel Gavra said, "I don't have a weapon, pastor." He opened his coat. He had a box of candles. They started lighting candles. They passed them out among the crowd. Some of you may remember, who are listening on the radio, seeing the picture in this Timisoara square, thousands of lights at night. And the communists could not stand it because that city was ablaze with the light of the gospel, with God's people standing there, surrounding this church.

Chuck Colson: The next day, Ceausescu couldn't stand it. He ordered them to open fire. Daniel Gavra, that 19-year-old lad who brought the candles in, had his right leg blown off. Four days later, the pastor went to see him in the hospital. Daniel Gavra was lying there. The pastor said, "It must be tough to have lost your limb." And Gavra said, "Oh no, pastor. But it was I who lighted the first candle." Oh God, give us the strength and the courage in America to be willing to give our limbs to light the first candle.

James Dobson: I've been reading-

Chuck Colson: That's the church.

James Dobson: I've been reading about Dietrich Bonhoeffer in the Nazi era and how he just refused to buckle.

Chuck Colson: He never did. And before they took him out and hung him at the Tegel prison, he got on his knees and prayed. And the last scene people saw Bonhoeffer alive was down on his knees, praying at the foot of the gallows while his captives were waiting to hang him.

Chuck Colson: And the story, you know, the Time magazine, and what to me is the ultimate expression of naivete in our culture, Time magazine named Mikhail Gorbachev the man of the decade. Now we see what an absolute rogue he was, and even the Russians are turning on him. He wasn't the man of the decade. Communism fell because the church remained alive behind the Iron Curtain.

Chuck Colson: I've been there. I've been in Czechoslovakia and Hungary. I've been to Russia. I've talked to the people who were in prison. They never wavered in their faith. They knew it was their duty to be the church and that they knew something that we don't know in this country. They knew that being precedes doing, that there's nothing you can do that does not flow out of the character of a holy community.

Chuck Colson: And if we really want to change this country, the place to start is in our churches where we become a holy community, where we are living the faith and from that we'll radiate out that light that we saw in the square in Timisoara, the light that brought down communism.

James Dobson: Boy, that moves me, Chuck.

Chuck Colson: I think it flows, Jim, out of the spiritual strength of the church, of the body of Christ, of the body of believers.

Chuck Colson: In Poland, when the communist officials ordered them to take the crosses off the wall in the classrooms, the Polish school children took the crosses down and marched through the streets with them. In America, when we ordered the Ten Commandments taken down from the walls of our classrooms, everybody said, "Ho hum, take down the Ten Commandments." See, we haven't had to fight for the most fundamental of our beliefs. And so we've been lulled into a sense of false security and I-

James Dobson: We may get that chance though.

Chuck Colson: Well, at the rate we're going, I really believe ... By every indicator, I really believe this culture today in America has become post-Christian. And when I say post-Christian, what I mean by that is what Francis Schaeffer used to warn us of, that is that not that people aren't going to church, they are going to church. Not that people aren't being born again, they are being born again. But the fundamental presuppositions of values by which we live in our society are no longer Christian. They're not the Ten Commandments. They're not the golden rule. People don't quote Bible verses. They aren't the basic fundamental propositions of Christian truth. They are hostile. They are radically individualistic. They are selfish. They are anti-communitarian. They are politically correct. They are hostile to the values that we hold dear. And so this culture can no longer be considered Christian. We in the church have got to be the outpost of light in the midst of the darkening culture in which we live.

James Dobson: Your subtitle of the book, *The Body*, is *Being Light in Darkness*.

Chuck Colson: Yes.

James Dobson: You see the culture today being dark?

Chuck Colson: I really do, Jim. As you and I were talking about at lunch today, you have the smell of sunset. You have the sense that we're just seeing a glimmer of light on the horizon and that we really are approaching a Dark Ages, maybe not unlike the Dark Ages in the early centuries in Europe. We need to remember it because we need to learn from history. It was the church that preserved learning. It was the church that preserved truth. It was the church that preserved civility in schools and the little monastic outposts. And eventually the barbarians fell

because the church infiltrated from the monasteries and went out and infiltrated that culture. And the barbarian hordes retreated and Europe once again became Christian.

James Dobson: In that lunch that we had together, you said that you felt the presence of the Holy Spirit and his involvement in the writing of this book more than any book you've written in a long time, I don't know, maybe ever.

Chuck Colson: I really did, Jim, in the sense that Loving God was a book that God has used in an extraordinary way in 45 countries in the world. Wherever I go, people, their lives were really impacted by that.

Chuck Colson: I wrote Loving God out of the deep conviction that religion seemed to be continually showing movement upwards and morality downwards. And so then the need in Loving God was to write something that was a call for heroic Christian obedience and faithfulness. And the book has been used wonderfully.

Chuck Colson: I couldn't write that book today, because the need is not for individual obedience. The need is for corporate obedience, for the people of God to come together and to unite and to be strong as the body of Christ, which is what this book is about. Not since Loving God have I felt such passion and conviction and anointing of the Holy Spirit in the process of writing a book.

Chuck Colson: It's a very similar book, as you know from reading it. It's many stories with some teaching chapters in between. And it's a similar book, but it's a call to the church, as Loving God was a call to the individual.

James Dobson: I would like for you to come back when you've got time, when you're passing through Colorado Springs or anywhere nearby. And I'd to talk a little more about the family in the context of the present political climate.

Chuck Colson: Oh, I would love to do that because-

James Dobson: I mean, that's an area that I'm really concerned about. I know you are too.

Chuck Colson: As you will know, Jim, I have talked about that many times. I think you are absolutely on the front lines. We talked about the church in the front lines. If you break down that family unit, which was the first institution God ordained, civilization stops. It's done. It's finished. And I think we're in grave danger. I see it in the inner cities, in the prisons, of losing the family.

Chuck Colson: And of course, in the political debates, it's a shocking, scandalous failure to even define the traditional family. No one even defines it-

James Dobson: Yeah.

Chuck Colson: And so, we've got to do it. And that's where you're doing it and that's where God bless you for it. I applaud you.

James Dobson: Thanks for being our guest, Chuck.

Chuck Colson: Thank you.

James Dobson: And the Lord bless you.

Roger Marsh: Well, this is Roger Marsh once again, and I hope you've enjoyed these two meaningful Family Talk broadcasts. If you'd like a copy of the complete interview, visit our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org. And once you get there, you'll see a button that says, "Order a CD," on it. All you have to do is hit that button and you can order a CD.

Roger Marsh: You'll also find links to the various organizations that Chuck Colson started. You'll find all that and more when you go to drjamesdobson.org and then click onto the Broadcast tab.

Roger Marsh: As we conclude today's broadcast, please know that Family Talk is a completely listener-supported ministry. Your generosity allows us to continue to fight for righteousness all throughout this culture. And you can learn how to partner with us by visiting our online resource center at drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. Or by giving a gift over the phone, when you call (877) 732-6825. That's (877) 732-6825. Thanks so much for your assistance, and thanks also for tuning in today. Be sure to join us again tomorrow for another exciting edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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