



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: When Life Throws You a Curveball

Guest(s): Frank Pastore

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Announcer: Today, on Family Talk:

Dr. Dobson: Well, welcome everyone to this edition of Family Talk. I'm your host as always, James Dobson. Today we're going to be airing a wonderful classic broadcast to honor a very special man who meant a great deal to us all. I'm talking about my late great friend, Frank Pastore. His name will be familiar to many of you I'm sure because he spent eight years of his life in Major League Baseball, starting with the Cincinnati Reds and ending with the Minnesota Twins.

Now, he's not remembered only for his baseball career, as great as it was, but primarily from his outspoken testimony for Jesus Christ. I think some of his fellow players led him to the Lord and from that point on he was owned by the Lord. He went on to have his own radio show, the Frank Pastore Radio Show. I was on it many times and it was carried on a large station in Los Angeles.

Unfortunately, Frank was in a tragic accident on November 19th, 2012 when a car careened across the 210 Freeway in Los Angeles and hit him as he was riding on his motorcycle. He was knocked into the center divider and was unconscious. In fact, he went into a coma. And Frank died from his injuries and went on to meet Jesus on December 17th, 2012. I tell you, I still miss this man today.

Shirley and I attended his memorial service and it was very emotional for me. The church was jammed with more than a thousand people. I remember when I walked in, a member of the family came and asked if I would be willing to say a few words. I hadn't planned to be a participant in the memorial service, but I did so and I explained just a little of our relationship because I did love and appreciate him so much.

I did say on that occasion that whenever Frank Pastore called and asked me to be a guest on his program, I tried to always say yes because I respected him so highly. I'm not always able to do that, but I had such deep respect and love for Frank Pastore. He was such a godly man.

With that, let's listen to a recorded message delivered by Frank Pastore to a large audience several years before his death. I'm sure it will touch your heart.

Frank Pastore:

You know, I was probably a lot like a lot of you guys that are here this afternoon. I spent a lot of my life trying to avoid events like this rather than trying to get to them. I grew up in high school thinking that the purpose and the meaning of life was to get rich and famous, to accumulate all the right stuff on the outside so that you can be happy and fulfilled on the inside. And so coming out of Damien High School, I set out to get rich and famous and so I signed with the Cincinnati Reds at the time and set out for riches, fame, and glory, because I thought that's what would bring happiness and fulfillment to my life, if I just got the right kind of stuff.

Three and a half years later, I find myself on the mound at Riverfront Stadium, relieving my boyhood idol, Tom Seaver, pitching to Johnny Bench. The defense that day against the San Francisco Giants was of course Johnny Bench catching, Dan Driessen at first, Joe Morgan, David Concepcion, George Foster, Ray Knight, Ken Griffey, his dad, and Cesar Geronimo. And it was an awesome experience for someone that had dreamed their entire life about getting to the big leagues, to be playing on a team with perhaps four or five Hall of Famers. The great Big Red Machine was now something that I was a part of, and it was a total rush to be there, much like being a little kid waiting for the wonderful Christmas presents to open out by the tree.

And I didn't know that life is just like that. You always think it's the next car, the next relationship, the next raise, the next whatever it is that's going to bring you happiness. And there was a reason our founders said it was the "pursuit of happiness" because you never really arrive until you find Jesus. I didn't know that.

So, coming out of high school... So setting out to get rich and famous out of high school, that very first day in the big leagues, I figured, you know what? Those feelings of accomplishment are going to overwhelm me any moment, and I just waited for them to come. Walked off the field after the game, got a chance to go and do all the interviews, which was a blast, and then got in the actual clubhouse. And in the clubhouse, it was sort of quiet. Most of the guys had gone because I was already doing the interviews and I hear this wonderful EF Hutton kind of voice call me over and beckon me to his locker, and of course it was the great Johnny Bench. And Johnny said, "Kid, get here, get over here." And back then rookies were seen and not heard and yes sir, three bags full. I came over to his locker.

Johnny said, "Kid, listen, I heard the interviews and there's a couple of things to share with you. First of all, it's harder to stay here than it is to get here." But that wasn't the most profound thing he said. He said, "Kid, don't ever get too cocky or too arrogant," and boy I was. But he said, "Never get too cocky or too arrogant because you're always only one pitch from humility." And of course he's talking about injury or he's saying, what have you done for me lately?

You're only as good as your last start or your last appearance. And I wasn't smart enough to figure all of that out. And I figured, "Hey, what does he know? He's only going into the Hall of Fame?" And so at that time in the big leagues, I had set out again to get rich and famous and those feelings never came. Not when I got the little red sports car I just had to have. Not when I got my wife the little car that she had to have. Not when we got the house we had to have. Not when we had 2.3 kids.

However, I did hang out with a group of guys that seemed to, at least they said that they had the answer. And of course they were the goodie good guys on the team. They were the guys that didn't cheat on their wife and do drugs. And they were actually, in all honesty, the only people my wife would let me hang around with. And they were of course the Christians. That's right. That's right. So I hung out with these guys for five seasons and they had always wanted me to come up into their room after the games and break open the word and share with me. And I learned really quick that that was just Christian lingo for answer questions you're not asking. And then if they want to gang up on you, they call it fellowship.

And so, so five years go by, five seasons go by of these guys asking, wanting to "share Jesus" with me. And I got to tell you what the real reality of it was, is I didn't believe there really was a Jesus. I grew up in an atheistic household. The only time I went to church was to check out the chicks during communion, and I had a couple of losing streaks in the minor leagues and I went to chapel and figured, "Hey, there might be something to it." But I never believed that it was true and real.

And I learned really quick how to shut these Christians up. You simply ask them some questions. How do you know God exists? How do you know Jesus rose from the dead? Why should I believe the Bible? Doesn't it contradict itself all over the place? Don't the cities of the Old Testament and the New Testament don't exist? Hasn't archeology shown them to be false? I mean, why don't you guys read a book and enter the 20th century and realize all that exists is matter and motion? Life is a pain and then you die. There's no life after death. And that's what I believed to be true and real. And these guys want to share with me. And the sad thing is, they simply couldn't answer my questions.

So God chose a different route. It's June 4th, 1984. I'm beating Fernando in L.A. There's two outs and in the eighth inning. I've got a guaranteed contract, a gorgeous wife, I don't do drugs. I'm a goody good. I'm playing life by the rules, but I don't believe that there's a God. I don't believe there's truth in reality. I don't believe there's life after death and religion is something that you get into if you screw up in life. It's not truth and reality.

And so God, who often speaks in whispers, sometimes will speak in thunderclaps. Now, I don't know if... I'm sure you guys, this has happened to you. You fall off a bike or you fall out of a tree or you get in an accident and time seems to go really slow. Well, I threw that pitch at Steve and Steve was an out if

you hit your locations right, and I threw a ball, left it out over the plate. I had two outs and nobody on, I was going after him, and he hit a rocket up through the box and it was exactly at my face. And so much like what you guys would do, you flinch to get out of the way. And I threw my precious right elbow in the way of a projectile at 134 miles an hour.

And as I grabbed my elbow, I realized I would never be able to compete in the survival of the fittest and climb to the top of the food chain by throwing stuff hard. Because it was much like just chicken bones and Oreos in a baggie. I could move stuff around in it. Okay? And I knew this is injury and not merely pain.

And in a crisis moment like that, my body had some shock to it and so the pain wasn't terribly bad, but it was just the chaos of your thoughts. I mean, what are you going to do now? I walked up in the clubhouse, waited for Frank Jobe, the orthopedic surgeon for the Dodgers, to come into the clubhouse and take a look. And as I did, the Christians came in and the guys that weren't playing, and they prayed for me. I thought, "Oh, how cute." You know? And I'm waiting for those memorized prayers where you go on autopilot and wake up at Amen. You know, like the Pledge of Allegiance? And they talked like God was real and He was in the room and Jesus could hear them.

And I frankly got spooked. I had two emotions. One was anger, like get real and it's cruel to play a trick like this about Easter bunnies and Santa Claus and people rising from the dead and fathers in the sky kind of thing. At a moment like this, when reality is something that's just painful. But the other reaction was, gee, golly, wouldn't it be great if it were true? I mean the story that there's a loving God that created the universe, has a plan for humanity, but man in his own freewill rebelled against that plan, sought his own way rather than God's way, brought a curse upon himself, and now nothing works until that relationship with God is healed, and Jesus Christ came as God in the flesh, the incarnation, the in fleshing, the in meeting. Oh, what a great story.

And yeah, it was bad. They had just invested a big contract in me and now I couldn't pitch and that was getting Marge Schott a little antsy. And long story short, Tommy Hume, who was the chapel leader called me from Houston. It was a Sunday afternoon game and the guys were going to play golf as they often do, flying west to east on Monday. And some of the guys were going to go do that and so Hume called and just said, "Hey, you want to ride along in the cart and stuff?" And I'd always found a reason not to go after the first time when they wanted to "share with me and have fellowship." And this time Hume invited me and said they were going to go to his house afterwards and grill out. He was from Florida and they were going to grill out. I went to say no, of course not. And a voice just like mine went, "Sure, I'll be there."

So, we go to Tommy Hume's house and the condo and they do the hot dog and the hamburger thing, and the Christians are acting really suspicious, you know, making faces and signs behind their backs like, "No, you go. No, no, no, you go first." They're acting really suspicious, like pagans don't see that. And I obviously

see that. And so we finally sit down now. We sit down and this is going to be my first Bible study. And I know all about the Bible. I know it contradicts itself, it's unhistorical, you can make it say whatever you want. And of course I've learned all these things without ever having read it for myself. I'm taking everybody else's word for it.

And so we sit down and start the Bible study. And I interrupt in about 3.4 seconds and I just blast these guys and I just ask all the skeptical questions, all the chiding, all the ribbing, all the stuff, and I just bomb these guys. And they just get laid out. They're just wiped out. I mean, they're professional ball players, not real bright as a group collectively anyway. I love them, I can say that. And so they get wiped out except for this one guy. And I just thought he was a rich businessman that liked to hang out with ballplayers. I had no clue who he really was. And they had just introduced him as Wendell.

And Wendell wasn't really impressed. I mean, he looked at me after I had finished my tirade and he says, "Finished?" And I went, "Yeah, I'm finished." And he said, "Wow. The guys said you were smart and you read books, huh?" And I said, "Yeah, I read books." And he says, "You know, you asked a lot of questions that I can't answer." And I said, "I know." And he said, "You've asked a lot of questions that I don't even understand the questions." And I said, "I know." And he said, "But you said one thing. You said you want to believe in what's true and what's real that has evidence behind it. You don't want to believe in fairy tales and fiction and Easter bunnies and Santa Claus. You want to build your life on what's true and what's real, and I want to believe in what's true and what's real, and guys, don't you want to believe in what's true and what's real?" And they had been practicing. "We want to believe in what's true and what's real."

So, Wendell turns to me and says, "Frank, will you help us?" And I said, "Sure. Sure. What would you like me to do?" And he says, "Well, you obviously know a lot more about this kind of stuff than we do, and I just happened to have brought three books here and if you would read these books and then write down where the authors are wrong, and just sort of correct it and all of that, we'll get back together again, guys, won't we? That's right. And we'll get together again and you can share with us everything that you've learned and then you can enlighten us to what's true and what's real, and then we can become happy and fulfilled just like you."

Now they didn't say who Wendell was. Wendell, his name is Wendell Deyo. He's the national director of Athletes in Action, the world's largest Christian sports ministry, who had been dealing with overpaid prima donna professional athletes for 20 years. They had just said, "Wendell." So Wendell hands me three books. And to show that God does indeed have a great sense of humor, in Pittsburgh of all places. In Pittsburgh, I come to this realization: Jesus Christ was a real historical figure that claimed to be God. He was sentenced to death by both a Roman and a Jewish tribunal. He was sacrificed, crucified, buried in a tomb for three days. He rose bodily from the dead, not as a spirit creature, but he rose bodily from the dead, was seen by over 500 people for a period of 40

days, radically changed the lives of 11 cowards to the point where it basically took over the Roman Empire in three centuries. And Jesus Christ said that He's coming back and He's ticked and you better get right or get left.

So, I became a Christian that afternoon in Pittsburgh. After the game, now this is during the game... After the game, the guys come in and there's like five, six Christians on the team. And I go up to Tommy Hume, and remember he's been trying to share with me since 1979. It's now 1984, right? And he's been trying to share with me and I go up to him and I said, "Hume, I'd really like to get together with the guys." "Praise Jesus." "Shh."

So, we go back to the hotel and sure enough we meet up in Tommy Hume's room and we sit down and the guys thought that they were going to all teach me their songs, you know, like "kumbaya" and all this stuff, and I had a different agenda, and that's the agenda I have for you here this afternoon. If you're a Christian here this is going to totally hit you right between the eyes because it usually does, and it hit me between the eyes just as it hit those guys between the eyes. It went something like this. Up in Tommy Hume's room, we sat down and they were going to educate me and teach me songs and what it means to be a Christian. Now I didn't know diddly about "churchianity." I just knew that Christianity was true.

So we got in the room and they wanted to say something and I interrupted and I said, "Guys, for five years you've been "trying to share with me," and I've asked you legitimate questions. And because I thought Christianity was false, I never seriously considered it. And I now realize that you guys are in violation of 1 Peter 3:15. It says to sanctify Christ in your hearts and to every man an answer or a reason for the hope that rests within you and to do it with gentleness and respect. And I asked you legitimate questions and my blood was on your hands because you didn't know why you believed what you believed. So now let's get things straight. When I asked this, you should have said this. And I taught my first class that afternoon. Amen.

You know, if you're a Christian here, you better know why you believe what you believe. We're in a culture that doesn't believe in truth. We believe that you can create your own reality as you go. We're in a hostile environment. Indeed, we're in Athens. We're not in Jerusalem. And that simply means for all of you to know why you believe what you believe, to be able to give to every man an answer or reason for the hope that rests within you.

If you're not a Christian here, here's the message I have for you. You could reject Jesus Christ for simply wanting to rebel against the Holy God you know is present. But don't ever say that Christianity is false, irrational, or does not have the evidence behind it because when you pursue truth, you will end up at the cross of Jesus Christ because He is truth incarnate.

You know, just up the road, there's Disneyland here, and I can remember taking my son, Frankie, and my wife, Gina, to Disney World in spring training. And my

son was about three or four years old and we hopped in the car and we drove an hour to Orlando and we parked and walked three and a half miles to the front gate and forked over 200 bucks to get in. You get in and in Disney World, just like Disneyland, you walk in and there's that center area and you've got Mickey and flowers and the choo-choo train and the two shoots on the side where you go onto main street.

Well my son, bless his heart, was only four years old and we walk in and we're sort of getting ready to attack Disneyland, you know, Disney World. And we go in and Gina and I are doing all the jackets and stuff and now it's time to go, and I grab my son's hand, little Frankie, and I start going and he jerks my arm back, and it dawned on me, he thought this is all there is. This is Disneyland. You've got Mickey and the choo-choo train. It was quite a price to pay to grab that four-year-old and drag him screaming through the tunnel until he finally got to Main Street, and then he was okay.

Every one of you here are one pitch from humility. It can be called cancer, infidelity, leukemia, a car wreck, bankruptcy. Whatever it is, there's something in your life that can happen to where the main thing would become the main thing and then you'll get your priorities right. Isn't it sad that the most important things in life we have so little time for, and yet we get consumed with the trivial things in life.

And finally, much like my son in Disneyland, I know a lot of Christians that are just happy to do a pray with me, come forward at a crusade or at an invitation, and stand, much like my son, through the gates. They're past the threshold, they get to go to heaven when they die, but they never mature and they don't realize there is truly an eternal kingdom available to them that Jesus wants to walk with them, as we do as brothers and sisters in Christ, to walk with them in the true kingdom. And that begins the moment that you come forward, that you receive Jesus Christ. But it's a process that He is faithful to complete and it's called sanctification, and that's as we prepare ourselves to live in God's presence. And that's available to every one of you here this afternoon. And I hope you don't have to have an event like one pitch from humility for you to hear God's voice.

God bless you guys. Have a great day.

Dr. Dobson:

Well this is James Dobson again. You can tell from that loud response from those in attendance that people really appreciated Frank Pastore and what he had to say that day. Listening to him again reminds me of how this message is really for both those who have faith and those who do not, and I know if Frank were here listening to this program today, he would want people to be drawn to the personhood of Jesus Christ by the life he lived. That was the passion of his heart. And when he came to the Lord, it was lock, stock, and barrel, and what a loss his passing is to the rest of us. We can't explain why the Lord took him early, but we're going to see him again on that great resurrection morning, along with all of the others whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Now in closing, I want to share a dramatic moment that occurred during Frank's last radio show. He was talking about life after death and though his words were not recorded, I wish we had them. I was told by his colleagues that this is a quote of what he actually said. He said, "You guys know I ride a motorcycle, right? At any moment I could be spread all over the 210 Freeway, but that's not me. Those are my body parts."

And that key distinction undergirds the entire Judeo-Christian worldview and our pursuit of reality. So Frank Pastore died on the 210 Freeway, and it's almost as though he had a presentment of his own death. I wonder what caused him to share that because he was not driving recklessly. I loved Frank Pastore and I love his memory today, and I pray for his wife, Gina, and their two children, Frank and Christina.

Frank's testimony is one worth learning more about and I would highly recommend that listeners get a copy of his book. It's called *Shattered: Struck Down, But Not Destroyed*. And in addition, I would highly recommend that you get a CD copy of what we've aired today and pass it along to a sports fan in your life or someone who desperately needs to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You can do all that by going to drjamesdobson.org or call us at (877) 732-6825. Thanks for joining us for this classic broadcast and I hope you'll listen in next time for another edition of Family Talk. I'm Dr. James Dobson. Have a blessed day.

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

Roger Marsh: Hi, this is Roger Marsh for the James Dobson Family Institute. I want to quickly tell you about a new initiative we've created here for the year 2020. One of our core values from the inception of this ministry has been the undeniable worth of life at every stage. So, as we celebrate our 10 year anniversary, we encourage you to become a JDFI Life Ambassador. Our goal with this effort is to equip thousands of men and women to stand with us for the cause of life. As a life ambassador, you will receive monthly emails to prepare you to be a voice in your community. You'll hear from pro-life leaders and experts in the fields of medicine and public policy who are making a difference in this battle. For more information or to partner with us in this vital effort, go to drjamesdobson.org/life. That's drjamesdobson.org/life. Stand for righteousness and become a JDFI life ambassador today.

Dr. Dobson: This is James Dobson again. As we close today's program, I just want to thank so many of you out there who make this broadcast possible with your contributions, and I want to tell you how much your generosity is appreciated.