



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Life After Hopelessness – Part 2

**Guest(s):** Kristen Anderson

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**Dr. James Dobson:** Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

**Roger Marsh:** Well, welcome back to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. And on yesterday's broadcast, we heard a truly emotional story of a girl who struggled with emotional issues and even thoughts of depression and suicide during her teenage years. She experienced some difficult and heart-wrenching trials, and despite having a loving family, she ultimately wrestled with wanting to end her own life.

It can be difficult to hear what Kristen Anderson had gone through, as well as the result of where her mind was taking her. And yet, during the next half hour, you're going to hear her provide parents with a glimpse into the emotional turmoil that can occur for some teens during those tender formative years. And even though her story is interlaced with pain, it's still one of hope and encouragement.

Today here on Family Talk, Dr. James Dobson will continue his conversation with his guest, Kristen Jane Anderson, talking about life after hopelessness.

Now on yesterday's broadcast, Kristen talked about dealing with the challenges that she faced in the first few years of her high school experience. In a short period of time, her grandmother and four of her friends passed away. And then to top it all off, Kristen was sexually assaulted as well. Within her pain, she got caught up in the party scene. She was quite depressed, and it all culminated on one fateful night when she tried to end her own life by lying down in front of a freight train. Miraculously, she survived that suicide attempt, but she wound up losing both of her legs in the process.

Now, if you missed the first half of this conversation, I urge you to listen to part one at [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). Or remember, of course, you can listen to it on the Family Talk app.

By the way, if you have young children with you right now, you want to make sure you turn off the radio and go online to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) and you can find today's program there where you can listen to it at your own discretion.

And even though this program was recorded several years ago, it is still relevant to the realities that many of today's teens are facing. So without further ado, let's now join Dr. James Dobson and his guest Kristen Jane Anderson right here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Isn't it a shame, Kristen, that you didn't know that you are more valuable than the entire universe, than anything that exists anywhere, you are more valuable, but you didn't believe that?

Kristen Anderson: No, I had no idea. I would've never thought that Jesus would've died for me if I was the only person on this earth. I would've never thought that I could have a new life in Him and that my life could be different and better with Him. I didn't know that I could know that I would go to Heaven if I accepted Him and His forgiveness into my life. I had no idea how valuable I was to Him.

Dr. James Dobson: And then lying there in the hospital, you had a new problem. You had to face life without legs. And if you were depressed over circumstances before, how did you deal with that reality?

Kristen Anderson: That was really hard for me. I remember everybody who knew me was worried because they thought if she didn't want to live her life with her legs, how's she going to want to live her life without her legs? And suicidal thoughts were something that I began to struggle with for a long time actually after this. I really, really struggled, really, I didn't feel like a whole person. I really, really hated myself for the decision that I made. It was really, really hard for me to forgive myself or to see that I could may have a productive, purposeful life without my legs. I didn't know how I was going to live my life without them.

Dr. James Dobson: Embarrassed by it all.

Kristen Anderson: Very, very embarrassed, very ashamed. It's not something I ever thought I would do. It's not something anybody thought I would do. I had a really hard time accepting it or even believing it.

But my friends and my family really came around me. I remember even in the hospital that first week I called my best friend and asked her if she could come help me get cleaned up in the hospital. And she was like, "Sure, but how are you doing?" And I remember just looking down at my legs and realizing they were still gone. They're still not there. This can't really be a nightmare. This is actually happening and saying, "I'm okay, but my legs are cut off," and tears just streaming down my face because that's when it became real to me. And she said, "Well, honey, it's okay. You're going to be fine. You don't need your legs."

And it sounds like so simple and so trite, but it was exactly what I needed to hear in that moment. And really all of my family and all of my friends surrounded me and they just loved on me like crazy. And one of the things that I heard all the time over and over again was, "Kristen, there's a reason you're here. God kept you here for a reason. There's something you're supposed to do here." And it was encouraging, but I heard it so much that I almost got sick of it because I didn't know why I was here or what I was supposed to do here.

Dr. James Dobson: But they gave you hope and a reason to live.

Kristen Anderson: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: If we fast-forward now to you're sitting here today and you came here in a wheelchair, and yet God is using you all across the country. He is blessing your book and He is using the message that you deliver, a message of hope, a message of worth, a message of God's love, and especially an understanding of Jesus Christ and how He can take us in the darkest moments of our lives and put an arm around us and tell us that He loves us and somehow make triumph out of a tragedy. You are an example of that. You are exhibit A in the work that He does in our lives. And that's what you want to convey, isn't it?

Kristen Anderson: Yeah. I just want people to know how incredibly faithful He is. He never, ever, ever gives up on us no matter what we have done or how we are feeling or what we think of Him. He never gives up on us and He loves us unconditionally.

Dr. James Dobson: How'd you come to know Him?

Kristen Anderson: When I was in the hospital, I started to think about the fact that I was still alive and people were telling me that it was a miracle that I was alive and God kept me here and things like that. And I started to really consider how big He was and how real He was and how much He might love me. But I didn't really think about it all the time until I went to church when we got out of the hospital one weekend. And there was a woman who came up to me who didn't know who I was, who had heard about what happened to me, and she told me that I would've went to Hell if I died. And I really struggled with that because I wanted to believe that I would've went to Heaven. I wanted to believe the feel good answer. And everybody around me kind of told me the feel good answer. "Yeah, of course, Kristen, you would've went to Heaven. Don't worry."

But I became concerned. What if I would've went to Hell? I felt like I needed to know that. And so I started seeking God and I really started seeking Him for answers. And eventually a couple came to have dinner with my family that were friends with my sister. And the husband of the couple I found out was in seminary to be a pastor. And I figured that he knew more about the Bible than anybody else that I knew. So I decided to ask him if he thought I would've went to Hell if I died. And he just told me that every single one of us were created to

be in a personal and intimate relationship with God, but because of our sin and the wrong things that we've done, we are separated from Him.

But that's why Jesus died to reunite us with God, to forgive us of our sins so that we can have eternal life with God in Heaven and live life with Him on this earth by His strength and by His grace. But we have to choose to accept His forgiveness and choose to let Him lead our lives.

And I knew that what He was telling me was something more true than anything I'd ever heard in my life. And I knew that I didn't have any kind of personal relationship with God. I felt a need for Him. I felt like that was what was missing in my life. And I knew that I was a sinner, especially after my suicide attempt. And I knew I needed to be forgiven.

So sitting on the floor in my parents' dining room, I just prayed the most simple and humble prayer and I asked Him to forgive me for everything that I'd done wrong. I asked Him to forgive me for trying to take my life. I realized that my life wasn't mine to take. And I realized that my only hope was in Jesus and what He had done on the cross and having Him in my life.

And I remember as I went to bed that night just feeling like something was lifted off shoulders like I didn't need to worry about tomorrow anymore. It was going to be okay. One way or another it was going to be different from here forward. And I know that that was the night that I became a Christian.

Dr. James Dobson: What an exciting message. And there are people listening to us now that need to hear this, Kristen. They're where you were. They don't know the Lord. They think they do because they've attended church or because they think they're a good person, which is not the same thing and they're not a Christian because they grew up in America, but they've never met the person of Jesus Christ and what He can do. Do you have anything you want to say to those folks?

Kristen Anderson: Yes. I want you to know if you are in the depths of depression or struggling with suicidal thoughts, that there's a reason that you're here, that God created you for a purpose and that He loves you more than you could ever understand, and He wants to bring you so much hope and so much forgiveness.

And if you reach out to Him, He will meet you in that place and He will bring you hope and He will bring you healing and He will give you a purpose beyond anything you could have ever imagined. There's nothing in this life that compares to doing life with Him. You are not alone. I know how you're feeling, but you're not alone. God is with you, and He can help you. And there are other people in the church and around this world who want to help you too. So reach out to them for help. Be honest with yourself and be honest with God because there's so much hope and help available.

Dr. James Dobson: When you speak to youth groups, what kind of response do you get?

Kristen Anderson: I am amazed by how many people come up to me and tell me that they struggle with suicidal thoughts or depression who tell me that they've attempted suicide, who tell me that they know somebody who attempted some suicide or did commit suicide. I didn't realize. I always felt like it was just a problem that I had and maybe a few other people. I didn't realize how widespread the problem was, but once people started responding and telling me it was a struggle that they had and started telling me that after hearing my story, they were encouraged that they could get through whatever they were going through, and then now they had hope.

Dr. James Dobson: And you tell them that is not the answer. There's a better answer.

Kristen Anderson: Right. Exactly. Exactly. Suicide is never the answer. No matter what is going on in your life, it is never the answer. It's not going to help you or anything else. It's going to take more from you than it could ever bring.

I needed to learn that. I didn't know that. I didn't know that a lot of the thoughts that I was having weren't just thoughts that there was something wrong with me. It was because Satan was planting these really negative and evil thoughts in my mind, and I was believing them. And I didn't realize that I needed to fight him and the things that he was doing in my life. I didn't realize that he wanted to destroy my life.

But once I realized that he wanted to destroy my life, but God wanted me to have life and He wanted me to have life abundantly, I started to realize that I needed to fight Satan in everything that he wanted to do in my life and just pursue God with everything in me. And the more that I walked towards Him, the more I felt like I was walking straight out of my depression and I started to experience the hope and the peace and the joy and the love for life like I had never ever had before.

Dr. James Dobson: Life itself is a spiritual battle, and there was a tug of war for your soul. Satan was against you and God was for you. And thank the Lord that you've made the choice to align yourself with Him and that Satan lost that one.

When you look back on it from this perspective, tell us how you perceive that whole night, that whole experience from this perspective.

Kristen Anderson: Well, in many ways this is going to sound strange, but in many ways that I'm glad that I lost my legs because it is what I needed to humble me and to see my need for God, to see how lost I was. And I am so grateful for everything that I've learned from the loss of my legs, that I wouldn't trade any of it, to have my legs back. And the longer it has been since everything, it was kind of a bittersweet thing in the beginning. It was hard to get over the loss of my legs. It was hard for me to feel like I could lead a productive life or I was a whole person.

Dr. James Dobson: How difficult is it for you now?

Kristen Anderson: Well, it just gets sweeter every single year. I feel like everything just makes more sense the more that I center my life around the Lord. I mean, obviously I'm still in a wheelchair and I still have daily challenges, but I actually hardly even think about the fact that I'm in a wheelchair. I just live my life normal and I love the Lord with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind, with all my strength, and I do everything that I can to serve Him. And I just feel so blessed to know Him and to serve Him and to be a part of ... a small part of the things that He's doing in this world.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that the way you feel?

Kristen Anderson: I mean, I would never do it again because I know that it broke the heart of God for me to want to take my life. The choices that I made brought a lot of consequences in my life that brought me a lot of pain. But letting God use that pain in my life to bring me closer to Him and to help me learn more about Him and the things that He wants me to do in this world and just the value that I have in this world and the relationship that I have with Him, I wouldn't trade for anything.

Dr. James Dobson: Are you finding that lost and discouraged young people are drawn to you, are captivated by you and want to know what you think and draw strength from you? Are you aware of that?

Kristen Anderson: It surprises me every single time. I can't believe the emails that we get. Every single time that I speak or share my story, we get hundreds of emails from people who feel exactly how I did and they read the book and they feel like they lived that exact same story. And they are encouraged that they can have the same kind of peace and the same kind of hope and the same kind of purpose in this world just like I did. And I would've never imagined that God could use me in that way. But to see that he is saving people's lives physically and spiritually just by me sharing what he's done in my life is an incredibly humbling and exciting experience.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you told us earlier that you were embarrassed about having tried to take your life. And yet you pushed past that discomfort and shared it with the world. And I thank you for doing that.

The same thing happened for my wife Shirley. She was raised in the home of an alcoholic. Her father was an alcoholic. And when you go through that, you're embarrassed about it. You don't want anybody to know. And your entire life is motivated to protect that information. You don't want anybody to know. And I just remember when we'd been married about 15 to 20 years, I talked to Shirley about that, that the Lord had done a miracle in her life. "Look at the love and the marriage we have now and the way the Lord is using us. And I think you need to tell that story." And she said, "No, I can't. I can't reveal that. No, I'm embarrassed about it even to this day."

And the Lord began to put His hand in her back and urged her to share it and said, "Shirley, I've done something wonderful for you. You need to share it with those that are still struggling." And so she did.

And the amazing thing is not only did people come to her who had been through that same thing and ministered to others because of that, but she began to get over the embarrassment and the pain of her childhood. She actually benefited from it personally, and she even wrote a book about it. So I can understand what you do, and I appreciate the fact that you are doing it.

Well, as we end this program, Kristen, I think it's important for us to not gloss over the difficulties of recovering from your attempted suicide and the loss of your legs and the emotional pain that you had experienced before. That was a process. The Lord didn't do it with a flash of lightning. It was day by day by day, wasn't it?

Kristen Anderson: Right. I mean, after I became a Christian, I knew that things were going to be different and I had a new hope for life. And I started talking to Him and I started praying. But I still struggled with suicidal thoughts and depression for about three years, especially around the anniversary of my suicide attempt. And I think the biggest reason that I struggled was because I didn't know how important it was to have Christian friends, to be a part of the body of Christ and how much that could help me. I didn't realize how important it was to read God's Word and every single day being in it, how much that could help me. And like we talked about earlier, I didn't realize that I needed to fight Satan because it was his desire to destroy my life.

But once I realized those things, I put them into practice and started to really have a relationship with God, let Him be my best friend and let Him be my father is when everything really started to change and I started to have that peace and that joy. So it was a journey day by day just trusting Him, following Him.

Dr. James Dobson: Parents get the feeling and for good reason that their kids don't want them in their lives. They get angry if you ask questions. You're prying into my private affairs. And they push you away as a parent. And yet at the same time, they're desperate for help and they want advice. They still want to know it's wrong to do certain things even though they're flirting with it. Does that describe you, Kristen?

Kristen Anderson: Oh yes, definitely. I was looking for so many answers. I remember even asking my mom how she did it, like, how does she get through her life every single day? And she didn't really know how to answer me. She said, "You just do it." And she says now that she didn't realize that God was really just carrying her through. But I was looking for how do you get through life? I remember I didn't ask a lot of questions, but some of them were very direct and I was listening with 10 ears.

I think it is so important for parents to make themselves available and to completely engage in their children's lives, to not feel like oh, they don't want me involved or they need to keep their distance. I feel like they need them desperately more than they could even imagine.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's talk about your ministry now. You are available to speak. Is it all right if we post information about how to get in touch with you on our website?

Kristen Anderson: Yes, definitely. I would love that.

Dr. James Dobson: And the ministry is called?

Kristen Anderson: Reaching You Ministries.

Dr. James Dobson: Reaching You Ministry. That's the personal aspect of it. And your book is *Life, in Spite of Me*. Now, let's end by you explaining that title.

Kristen Anderson: I love the title *Life, in Spite of Me*. I don't feel like anything else could capture my story more than that title because in spite of everything that I did wrong, in spite of everything that ... every mistake that I made, God gave me a life on this earth and a life eternally, that it doesn't compare to anything I could have ever found in this world.

Dr. James Dobson: Kristen, thanks for being with us. Thanks for coming to see us and for sharing the good news, the gospel of Jesus Christ with so many people. Again, the book is titled *Life, in Spite of Me* by Kristen Jane Anderson. Do you like yourself today?

Kristen Anderson: I do. I do. A big difference for me was starting to see myself for who God saw me, not for what I saw myself, not for what other people saw me, but for how He sees me. And the more that I see myself for how He sees me, the more I can love myself.

Dr. James Dobson: How can people pray for you now?

Kristen Anderson: I think the biggest way is just in continued strength and endurance and following the Lord and going all the places that I can to share His hope and His love with the world, and also for the ministry helping us really raise the funding and the volunteers that we need to help people grow in their relationships with the Lord as much as possible.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you have people who can respond, especially the young people who call in, they're desperate for help?

Kristen Anderson: Well, we have an email support team that is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and when people email, they will receive an email within 12 to 24 hours from somebody who can help them through whatever they're going



through. And I think a lot of people write our email support team because it's anonymous, because they can-

Dr. James Dobson: A lot of pain out there, isn't it?

Kristen Anderson: Right, right. And they want to talk to somebody who understands. Obviously, they know that I can understand. They want to talk to me or somebody else who can understand, and so we try to help them as best as we can.

Dr. James Dobson: God be with you.

Kristen Anderson: Thank you so much, Dr. Dobson.

Roger Marsh: Isn't it truly amazing what God did with Kristen's heart as He led her to use her experience to help others? It is truly a miracle indeed. You've just heard the conclusion of a powerful two-part conversation featuring Dr. James Dobson and Kristen Jane Anderson today here on Family Talk.

If you'd like to learn more about Kristen, her ministry called Reaching You or her book entitled, *Life, in Spite of Me*, simply visit our website at [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). Keep in mind, you can also share the broadcast with a friend or family member either from our website or by using the Family Talk app.

Now, if you're a parent who has a child whose behavior has changed somewhat, or if you or maybe someone you know or possibly a family member might be struggling with depression and even suicidal thoughts, do not hesitate to reach out for help. You can contact the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. All you have to do is dial 988 to get through. That's 988, which connects you with a skilled counselor and gives you the support that you need. The call is confidential and you can call anytime 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Again, dial 988 for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Now as we recently celebrated Independence Day, I want to ask you to reflect on the caliber of the men who founded our great nation. They held fast to their beliefs and their faith in God. These were men who believed in honor and being men of good character. And there's always something more to learn from their accomplishments and values. If you'd like to do so, consider signing up for our brand new five day email series. It's absolutely free and it's called "Faith of the Founders." Now to sign up, all you have to do is click on the link at the bottom of today's broadcast page at [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). That's [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk) and click the link that's on the bottom of today's broadcast page. Well, as we conclude today's program, Dr. Owen Strachan is with me in studio today. Owen Strachan is the senior director of the brand new Dobson Culture Center. It's the newest addition to the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute family. And Dr. Strachan, we want to welcome you to the broadcast,

welcome you to the ministry, and though you've already been fighting this culture war from quite some time, may I also say welcome to the war.

Dr. Owen Strachan: I've been fighting for a few years, but I really appreciate the kind welcome, and it's a joy to be here with you and the team.

Roger Marsh: Okay. You're working from the perspective of as a theologian, as a pastor, as an author. We've had you on as a guest many times here on the Dr. James Dobson Family Talk program. But I think probably the thing that impresses me the most is that you are the father of three teenagers and you're still engaging in this battle. You want to help other families succeed as you're succeeding too. Talk about why that's so important to you.

Dr. Owen Strachan: Yeah. There, but for the grace of God, go I in terms of the wreckage of teenage parenting. I'm so thankful for God's grace at this stage in the journey and for all of them.

But in all seriousness, we've got to know that though our teens are facing fearsome odds in terms of the culture and what it's trying to indoctrinate them in, we have the antidote, we have exactly what they need. And if we will raise our kids in homes that are saturated with grace and truth in a John 1:17 way, we can know that our good God will work out his purposes for their good and his glory.

Roger Marsh: Well, amen. And thank you Owen for joining us today and sharing about the Dobson Culture Center with us. There is more to come from Dr. Owen Strachan and the Dobson Culture Center. As a matter of fact, when you go to our website at [drjamesdobson.org/introducingthedobsonculturecenter](http://drjamesdobson.org/introducingthedobsonculturecenter), you can sign up to receive the Lighting Up Culture Weekly report that Dr. Owen Strachan is publishing each and every week. Again, go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) and look for the link for the Dobson Culture Center, and we can get you signed up for the Lighting Up Culture Weekly feature.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for making Family Talk a part of your day, and be sure to join us again tomorrow for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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