



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Declaration of Independence: Faith and Freedom Defined

Guest(s): Jerry Newcombe

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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: Welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. You know, as we enter the month of July and begin this new month together, I hope that you were enjoying perhaps some nice weather, maybe a little relaxation on this day before Independence Day. You might be on the go in the car, maybe taking a road trip somewhere. Well, have you ever been to our nation's capital? If you haven't, I strongly encourage you consider a trip sometime. You can see the rich history that's there that tells the story of our country's origin. And one document that you should definitely take in is the Declaration of Independence. Now, you may recall these famous words by Thomas Jefferson. "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal and that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights. That among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Spelled out right there, we establish that God is where our rights come from. What a powerful statement, one that we need to always remember.

Well on today's program here on Family Talk, Gary Bauer, public policy director here at the JDFI sits down with Dr. Jerry Newcombe, executive director of the Providence Forum. Together they will discuss some of the fascinating history involved with the writing of what many consider America's most important document: the Declaration of Independence. Together these two men will explain why we need to pass on its rich history. So let's join them right now, right here on Family Talk.

Gary Bauer: Hello everybody. Thank you for joining me today on this special edition of Family Talk on the day before Independence Day, the day when we celebrate the anniversary of this great free nation that has brought more liberty and more opportunity to more people than any government or country in the history of the world. I'm Gary Bauer, the senior vice president of public policy here at the James Dobson Family Institute, and I'm honored along with our whole team to serve alongside our good friend, Dr. James Dobson. Dr Dobson and all of us have been in this fight for religious liberty and the sanctity of life, and many of these issues that really define what America's all about. We're in a time in our

country, my friends, where there's a bit of national amnesia. I think everybody is beginning to realize that we are not passing on to the rising generation, the most important information they need about our country, about what it stands for and where our liberty comes from.

And so to have a conversation about that today, we are honored to have as our guest on the program, a longtime friend of mine, an author and speaker, Jerry Newcombe. Jerry is the executive director of the Providence Forum. He's also the senior producer and on-air host and a columnist for Dr. James Kennedy Ministries. Jerry has produced or co-produced more than 70 one hour television specials that have aired nationwide. He's written or co-authored over 30 books including *What If Jesus Had Never Been Born*, *Doubting Thomas* and *A New Birth of Freedom*. He earned his doctorate of ministry in 2008 from Knox Theological Seminary. Jerry, I always have to update my bio. You're married to Kirsti. You have two grown children. Is it still three grandchildren?

Jerry Newcombe: Yes, it is.

Gary Bauer: Okay. Well look, welcome to Family Talk. We're honored to have you on the program today. Jerry, I'd like to begin by you just telling us your heart, why have you spent so much time and effort trying to get the American people and more specifically, America's young people to understand the true meaning of the American founding and why it was a revolutionary moment unlike anything that has been seen in the history of mankind?

Jerry Newcombe: Well, we are really privileged to be Americans and unfortunately the vast majority of Americans today have forgotten the source of American liberty, and that is our Judeo-Christian heritage. And so I've been very much involved by the grace of God with D. James Kennedy Ministries, which is still, that's my full-time employer and there's even a new division within D. James Kennedy Ministries that I'm privileged to head up and it's called Providence Forum. Ultimately that was founded by Peter Lillback. And Providence Forum is geared towards basically educating Americans, starting with Christians to appreciate the heritage that we have. It's not just because it's interesting history and so forth, it's because it's the source of our freedom. Take away God, and ultimately you lose those freedoms.

In fact, I like to say this, the American experiments, and that's what it is, the American experiment can be summarized in two key phrases, self-rule, under God. If you remove either of those two phrases, you really lose the source of our freedom. And I think the left, as you well know, they have their big guns aimed at both of those prongs. There's a statement, Gary, that you have often made in your end of the day reports, which I find to be vital reading. And the statement is, "The left doesn't want to win the debate, the left wants to shut the debate down." I have quoted that in so many different outlets because it's so true. And I think what we need to do though is be armed with the facts and to speak the truth in love and try and help people to understand that if you remove God, you remove the source of our freedoms.

Gary Bauer:

Well said Jerry, and thank you for the shout-out for my end of day. That's where I kind of put all my emotion each day. I'm not sure what I'm doing to the reader, but I feel better after I've pontificated for a while about the things I see around me. Jerry, years ago, back in 2000, I visited a lot of high schools and I was getting strange questions from a lot of the students and it made me feel, it me see really in a very direct way that they really weren't being taught American history. And I remember asking students, "Do you understand?" I said, "That America was found on really a religious idea or a moral idea that's in the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence." And I offered them \$20 if they could finish for me the sentence, "We hold these truths." And in visits to over 100 schools, I only lost \$40. Talk about that sentence and why it is so significant about the meaning of America.

Jerry Newcombe:

Well, it really shows that the founders recognized our rights come from God. "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal and are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights." And among these are the right to life, the right to liberty and the right to the pursuit of happiness. And this is really important because if you take away God, you take away the source of our rights. In fact, in a documentary that I've made recently for Providence Forum, again part of D. James Kennedy Ministries, it's called "Endowed by Their Creator." And there's this section we have in there where we contrast the American Revolution with the French Revolution. And some people think, "Oh, they're kind of two sides of the same coin." No, they're really not. In fact, it's probably better to call the American one, the American War for Independence. But anyway, one of the guests in our program, by God's grace, we had a lot of really great guests, but Dennis Prager of PragerU makes this statement. This is in our film.

"The American Revolution and the French Revolution is the battle in the United States. Which revolution will prevail? This in so many ways, God being obvious. Now they loath the idea of God in the French Revolution. The secular republic was the ideal. In America, they believed in secular government, but in a God-based society because rights come from God in America and you can only have liberty if you have God. This is a logical, this is not a faith statement I'm making. People will either feel accountable for their behavior to God or the state. Those are your two choices. It's an absurdity to believe that they'll be good if they're accountable only to themselves. If you're only accountable to yourself, you will always justify what you do. So it's foolishness to believe you can make a good society where everybody is only accountable morally to themselves. This is the battle, the French Revolution and the American Revolution and God is the ultimate issue." Again, that's a statement from Dennis Prager in our film, my latest film on the Foundation of American Liberty series, "Endowed by Their Creator."

Gary Bauer:

Well said. And of course, Dennis Prager is a Jewish American, and it reminds me of the fact, Jerry, that, and I'm not sure most Christians understand this, and you correct me if I get any of this wrong because I really feel that you're an expert on this. But our founders, these were very well-read men and they certainly

were familiar with Roman and Greek political philosophy, and they got ideas out of those two civilizations that they folded into the American Republic. But the most important ideas in the American founding, really the founders got from the Old Testament and the New Testament, the ideas about the dignity of man because we've been made in the image of God and the separation of powers because men are evil. And so you have to have a lot of checks and balances in order to limit the damage of their passions and their vices and so forth.

I think, this is my instinct, I haven't seen a study on it. But if you said to American young people or maybe Americans generally, "Do you think the Bible had much to do with the American founding?" I'm afraid a lot of them would say, "Oh, no, no, the founders didn't want the Bible to have anything to do with American government."

Jerry Newcombe: That's so true. And yet even now in our highly secular age, whenever somebody becomes president and they're sworn in, they're sworn in there on the Bible. Now, the Constitution doesn't mandate that they do that, but George Washington started the tradition with his native Anglican tradition where they would do that and they would say the words, "So help me God." Again, these are not rules that are stipulated in the Constitution, but in 46 times of presidents being sworn in, they've been doing the same tradition, following the same thing George Washington did. By the way, he reached over during that first inauguration, George Washington did, and he kissed the Holy Bible. And I remember Dr. Kennedy once talked about that, he mentioned that, and he said, "Wow, that's enough to give the ACLU apoplexy." And I learned a word in that statement from Dr. Kennedy, apoplexy, but it's true.

And even apart from the symbol of the Bible or the idea of swearing in on the Bible, biblical teaching does indeed undergird so much of the American experiment. I mean even those words from the Declaration of Independence that we talked about earlier, those are theological propositions when you think about it.

Gary Bauer: Yes.

Jerry Newcombe: It may have been self-evident to Thomas Jefferson and these other men who grew up knowing the Bible as one scholar put it, and his name was Dr. Donald S. Lutz. He's the Lutz of Heinemann and Lutz where they studied all these different writings that were so important to the founding fathers that they quoted in their political writings. They found that the Bible was quoted four times more than any human author, but then the three most quoted authors were Christian sources in this order, Montesquieu, Sir William Blackstone, and John Locke. But anyway, you see that biblical teaching undergirds so much including that idea that we are endowed by our creator, that there is even a creator and He's endowed us with these rights. God-given rights are not negotiable privileges. They are firm.

In fact, in my film, I closed the whole thing with John F. Kennedy in his inauguration speech where he said, "The belief in America that's so important our forebears held is that the rights of man come not from the generous hand of the state, but from God." And that's the whole point. And if we ever lose that, as Ronald Reagan said, didn't you serve in the Reagan administration?

Gary Bauer: Yes, I did.

Jerry Newcombe: You probably were there when he made this statement that, "America is one nation under God, but if we ever forget that we're one nation under God, we'll be one nation gone under."

Gary Bauer: He said it many, many times. He first said it, I'm afraid to admit because it marks how long I've been walking around. I heard him say it in a speech in 1964, that became a famous speech he gave on behalf of Barry Goldwater. And in that speech, he talked about God's hand in America, and he said that "The world could not remain half slave and half free." He was referring to the battle between communism and freedom. He said, "Any more than America could remain half free and half slave." One concept would have to prevail. And he made it absolutely clear that he thought America played a very specific and special role in God's unraveling of history and God's plan for mankind. And I remember being in this blue collar family. My dad was a janitor. We didn't know how we were going to pay our bills from week to week, but all of a sudden I was thinking I'm a citizen of something incredibly special.

And I was so impressed by that speech that I literally decided in my living room at the age of, I was a teenager, that Reagan was going to be president someday and I would work for him in the White House. And it ended up happening not because of anything I did, but because I thought that God's hand was in all of that. But that's my story. And we're talking about America's story, Jerry, and as I said, we're on the eve of celebrating America's birthday and in a couple of years we will celebrate America's 250th birthday. And Jerry, how can you have a birthday if we don't understand the life that we're celebrating? And it appears that many of our citizens don't understand the life we're celebrating, this life of America. Do you agree that this forgetfulness wasn't accidental, that it's been very intentional by people that ended up taking over America's educational establishment?

Jerry Newcombe: Yeah, I do. I think the idea of getting rid of God in the schools has just been such a terrible ... It's borne such terrible fruit. It's very ironic too, by the way, because the schools for the masses were born out of the goal to teach the Bible to young people. In fact, I have another one of these episodes in the Foundation of American Liberty series. It's called "The Beginning of Wisdom," and it's all about the Bible and education. And it shows how for the first 200 years, that the Bible was the chief textbook in one way or another. It was belief in the Bible that founded Harvard and Yale and Dartmouth and Princeton and so on. All of the Ivy League schools otherwise were founded by Christians for Christian purposes,

often just to train ministers of the gospel so that the gospel could perpetuate in America.

Education at the younger level was all Christian. In fact, the first law in America, which was related to schools was called the Old Deluder Satan Act. And this is in Boston, Massachusetts. It being one of the chief ends or objectives of that Old Deluder Satan to keep people from the Word of God. And they went on from there and explained that, okay, we're going to have an educated populace so that children can read the Bible for themselves. The Bible gave birth to education. By the time you get to the founding fathers, even the few that may have had not orthodox views as far as Christianity, small o, those men knew the Bible "down to their fingertips" to use a phrase or quote from Donald S. Lutz, the Bible helped shape so much of what became the United States and the freedoms we enjoy. Instead of being a regressive force in history, the Bible has been a very positive force.

Gary Bauer: So Jerry, as we're sort of bringing this to a conclusion, we live in a cancel culture. I run into big hulking guys at my church and I'll say to them, "Why aren't you doing more?" And they go, "Well, Gary, I agree with you, but I don't want people saying bad things about me on social media and maybe I'll lose a couple of friends." And I'm thinking, good grief, you are living on the shoulders of men that literally risked their lives and fortunes. I know you know this almost by heart and many of our listeners may, but I think it's another one of those things that we just ... Can you describe a little bit of what the risks were that the founding fathers, and quite frankly, all of the colonialists were taking when they dared to defy the greatest power in the world at the time?

Jerry Newcombe: Well, after trying to work with the British and seeing their rights as British subjects taken away over step after step after step, finally the founding fathers meeting in Philadelphia in 1776, they decided that they would actually write up a Declaration of Independence. There was a committee of five chosen, and that included John Adams and Ben Franklin and the young Thomas Jefferson. And Adams recognized Jefferson was a good writer, so he tasked him to write the first draft, and Jefferson did. And the Declaration of Independence mentions God four times. Now they modified his declaration. By the way, one of the things he made in that declaration was he wanted to outlaw slavery right then and there. But the other founding fathers thought, well, we've got to get all the states to unanimously agree to this document. Let's get it passed, and then we can address that issue down the road, which they did eventually.

And so anyway, the Declaration of Independence was definitely very radical, it mentions God four times. And one of the last lines in it, they talk about "with a firm reliance on divine providence" meaning God. And they also mentioned "we appeal our intentions to the supreme judge of the world" meaning Jesus Christ, quite frankly, because he is the judge of the world. And these were Christian men that were doing this, professing Christian men, 27 of them had the equivalency of seminary degrees, and they said, "We are trusting in God as we mutually pledge our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor." Many of them

had their properties stolen. A few of them even died because of their commitment. They made a voice vote on July 4th, 1776 for the final wording of the Declaration of Independence. And then over the next several months as they could, different ones of them signed it.

In fact, when Ben Franklin signed it, recognizing it was like signing your death warrant, Ben Franklin actually said, "Well, we shall all hang together, or most assuredly we shall hang separately." And John Hancock, when he signed it, he signed it in such a big way that he said, "Wow, King George III can read this without even wearing his spectacles." They were definitely taking a big risk in this Declaration of Independence, but they wanted to do this for themselves and for their posterity. They felt it would be the more honorable thing to do, to basically do the right thing as they understood it. And in fact, the son of John Adams, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, he made a great statement, and I love this statement. It's kind of my motto. "Duty is ours. Results are God's."

Those men could have signed that, they could have ended up getting killed, but the bottom line is they signed it and we have a free country and here we are. They're beneficiaries 250 years later, but we're not doing a good job passing this information onto the next generation. And I pray that we can do more things like this, and I thank you so much, Gary, for this opportunity to try and educate people about this rich heritage that we've received. And unfortunately, as D. James Kennedy put it, he said, "Our freedoms and our heritage are kind of sifting through our fingers like sand at the beach." If you're holding your hands open and the sand is just pouring out, but there's a great heritage to bestow to the next generation for our freedom's sake.

Gary Bauer:

Wow. So well said Jerry, thank you for the incredible work you've done over many, many years. The James Dobson Family Institute, we're proud to be your ally and have you as our ally, and I know Jerry, that you join me in asking our audience, first of all, happy 4th of July. Second of all, take the day after some hot dogs and fireworks to remind your children what a blessing it is to be in America, a country built on the idea of one nation under God. Thank you everybody for being with us. Be back again for Family Talk, and we look forward to talking with you then.

Roger Marsh:

Well, what a dynamic and thought-provoking conversation as we all begin to turn our thoughts to this special nation's origin story. I'm reminded of the words of the Apostle Paul in Galatians 5:13. He wrote, "You, my brothers and sisters were called to be free, but do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh. Rather serve one another, humbly in love." And that is why we call America the "Grand Experiment." Now you've been listening to Dr. Jerry Newcombe, our guest today here on Family Talk along with Gary Bauer. If you'd like to share today's program with a friend or a loved one, all you have to do is visit drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. Our founding fathers had a strong relationship with the Lord and courage to carry out God's work. It's important not to lose sight of that example that they set

forth all those years ago. In today's culture, men often receive more pressure than praise, and so much as being asked of you these days from managing finances to household vehicle maintenance, and most importantly, making every possible effort to raise a Godly family.

It definitely isn't easy, guys. Finding time for rest and recharging can be quite difficult, but we want you to know that the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute is here for you with an abundance of resources, prayer, and encouragement. That's why I encourage you to sign up for our 10-day Straight Talk to Men email series. This may be just what you're looking for to sharpen the tools God has given you to live your life amidst today's broken and sometimes confusing culture. To sign up for the 10-day Straight Talk to Men series, simply go to drjamesdobson.org/straighttalk. That's drjamesdobson.org/straighttalk. I'm Roger Marsh, and from all of us here at the JDFI thank you for making us a part of your day. Enjoy the holiday, but take us with you. Tomorrow, a special patriotic message from Dr. James Dobson, only here on Family Talk.

Announcer:

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