



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Laughing in the Dark

Guest(s): Chonda Pierce

Air Date: April 26, 2021

[Listen to the Broadcast](#)

- Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute supported by listeners, just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.
- Roger Marsh: Hello everyone. And welcome back to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and I want to thank you for making Family Talk a part of your day today, and every day for that matter. In Proverbs 17:22 we read, "A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." When life gets hard, sometimes the best remedy is a bit of laughter. And that's what our guest today on Family Talk believes and also puts into practice. Her name is Chonda Pierce, and she is a highly sought after, Emmy-nominated comedian, author, and television host. Chonda takes her personal stories and uses them to encourage and entertain audiences nationwide. She's appeared on *Entertainment Tonight*, *The View* and *Fox News Channel*, among others.
- Recently our own Dr. Tim Clinton, the co-host of Family Talk and President of the American Association of Christian Counselors sat down and visited with Chonda Pierce. They discussed the importance of laughing through hard times and keeping our focus on Jesus Christ. Now, what you're about to hear was recorded backstage at an Extraordinary Women's event in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The crowd was filing in, backstage preparation was going on. You can feel the excitement and the ambiance behind them. So let's go there right now.
- Dr. Tim Clinton: Chonda, It's great to have you here at the Extraordinary Woman Conference in Tulsa, Oklahoma.
- Chonda Pierce: Thank you.
- Dr. Tim Clinton: Chonda, you're on the road finally.
- Chonda Pierce: Oh my goodness. I do think my neighbors were paying to get me out of the neighborhood. It is wonderful. I don't know that people realize the fingerlings, and don't get me wrong, I'm not an essential person, but when I am working, there are employees that will get to work.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Everybody.

Chonda Pierce: There are bus drivers, and then the bus mechanic, and then the building that houses the bus, and then the lady that makes the t-shirts and the gal that cooks the popcorn. I mean, it's just a myriad of people that work in the entertainment industry when we get to work. And that is to me, more exciting than actually getting out on the road, is watching those people come alive again.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chonda, I think everybody's done.

Chonda Pierce: Yes. I do too.

Dr. Tim Clinton: People are emotionally exhausted. They're empty. They're just saying, "Hey. We're going." And I think people want to be sanitary, they want to be safe. But this is about being sane.

Chonda Pierce: Oh, absolutely. Let me tell you. We have a new COVID protocol to traveling and Awakening Events is primarily my promoter. He, myself, Toby Mac, I think Zach Williams and maybe Mac Powell. We're the only ones kind of out there on the road right now. But it's because we established this long list of protocols. We have to have a COVID test, the big one and the quick one before we get on the bus, then we have to protect our bubble after we have our test, before the bus leaves. So my son, I live with my son now, and that's just why I'm here for therapy, but he's 31. It's totally different when your adult son lives at home.

Dr. Tim Clinton: He came back home.

Chonda Pierce: He's been in California 10 years. And when your son comes home for a few weeks from college, it's kind of cool and fun. But when you walk in and there's a 31 year old man in your kitchen, it's like, "Who are you and why are you still here?" But he's a delight. He's a delight. But what he and I were also talking about is this list of protocol. Just so ... And I'll be honest with you, Dr. Tim, I'm not afraid, but you want to do things so the people around you will not be afraid. And so we have to wear our mask. The other night I did the Opry. You have to have your little COVID test. You have to have your temperature taken before you walk in. And I also asked for my mammogram as I was going through those. I'm just trying to get it all done before I get on the bus. So, and it's worth it. It's just worth it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chonda, locked down for a year. I can't imagine Chonda Pierce ... You and I have a similar disease where you got a little ADD.

Chonda Pierce: Yes, yes we do.

Dr. Tim Clinton: What was it like to be literally locked down?

Chonda Pierce: Oh my stars. 274 puzzles later. Three at the same time.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We get that.

Chonda Pierce: Every closet is so immaculately cleaned out and then I mess them up again, just so I can clean them out again. It has been, it's crazy, but I don't know that it's ... At this point, you have to finally say, especially, and my heart goes out to those who struggle. And Dr. Tim, you will know this. You've been such a psychological friend. I was diagnosed clinically depressed about 12 years ago. And so I have to be very careful and isolation is a killer for depression.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It is, it's a real trigger.

Chonda Pierce: Right. And my heart goes out to the suicide rate that has climbed among teenagers.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Mental health issues are off the charts, they really are.

Chonda Pierce: Mental issues are off the chart. Now my brother and I were part of founding a counseling center, and we moved quickly to the tele-health. We've done everything to stay in touch with the patients-

Dr. Tim Clinton: Clients.

Chonda Pierce: ... the shrinks did, I didn't. I'm just a patient. I am a client, but those things are so important, and when you're trying to tell your depressed patients, "Don't isolate, don't isolate." And yet the government is telling you "Isolate, isolate." It is, it's hard. We're in a tough place right now.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chonda, I love the verse in Proverbs 17:22, "A merry heart doth good like a medicine." Tonight you're going to be out there yet, you make audiences laugh. I mean, they get out of control. I mean, Extraordinary Women loves to have you. I mean, and sometimes it does get out of control.

Chonda Pierce: Yes, it does.

Dr. Tim Clinton: "But a broken spirit drieth the bones." And Chonda, I'm going to go back. I want to introduce the audience to you, your career, how you got started in comedy. It goes back to what? Imitating?

Chonda Pierce: Minnie Pearl, Minnie Pearl.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Minnie Pearl.

Chonda Pierce: I sang and moved slightly to the music at a theme park because I grew up in a denomination that doesn't dance. So I didn't want to go to hell in a hand basket.

So I did my choreography very carefully, but I got the part in a show that gave the history of country music. And I impersonated Minnie Pearl for seven years. And in that process, I got to meet her and hang around with her. And the thing that is amazing to me, Dr. Tim, and I always tell people, I don't know your theology. That's what Dr. Dobson and I have in common. We were both Nazarenes at one time in our lives. So, in my holiness tradition, I had a revolving door experience with the Lord. If I hiccupped and said wrong word, I had to get saved again. And I got saved a lot.

So, I don't know when it stuck, but there was a time in my life when I was angry at God and I was hurt and mad. And that's great fueling ground for a comic. I mean, have you ever watched a comedian, that's just their delivery is about anger and frustration and bitterness? And they're funny as heck.

Dr. Tim Clinton: They're funny.

Chonda Pierce: But you want to throw your arms around them going, "What hurt you so badly that you're that angry?" And I was there and I got a job as a young 22 year old in a theme park. So I had to impersonate this wholesome, beautiful, funny character named Minnie Pearl that Sarah Cannon had come up with. It was a time in my life when that bitterness was just about to destroy me. And I was angry at growing up a very conservative preacher's kid and a dad who walked out and seemed to turn his back on all those principles that we had to adhere to our whole life, many of them that I thought was a little ridiculous. He was not a good father. He was a good pastor, but he was a terrible husband. And, and I had a horrible disillusioned childhood.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chonda, Minnie Pearl had some words that really changed your life.

Chonda Pierce: We were backstage. I would be her opening. I would go out and do Minnie Pearl and kill some time and as she got older and then she skipped out behind me and go, "Well, who are you?" And so that particular day, along with a lot of young performers, I got to share a dressing room with her. And she had great stories about Patsy Cline and Roy Acuff and the old days. But she said to me, she goes, "Do you like this kind of thing?" And I said, "Yes, ma'am, I do." I guess she had a gauge on my sense of timing. And I was always trying to sneak in a joke that really wasn't a grinder switched joke, but I just wanted to see if it worked, that kind of thing. And she said, "Well, you will never know what real laughter is until you know the love of God."

And I just thought, for sure my mother had told her to come in here and say that to me because I was running from God. I was angry at God and frustrated at God. And what I realized that the God of the universe, it was much lighter when I truly dedicated my life to him and give him what I do that I realized she was absolutely right. The God who created all things and he doesn't make a mistake. And he created every emotion, every body part. He created us all and he doesn't make a ... and he wants us to use every one of those emotions in

appropriate manner, even anger. And the Bible says, "Be angry, but sin not." But it also says, "Laughter is a great medicine." Now I grew up in a church culture that I think they forgot about the laughter part. And so I felt it my mission to get those old fogies to start laughing again.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chonda, everybody has a story. And when you go back and unpack, you can see a lot of the threads of life kind of flowing through for you. Your childhood, you already referenced, was pretty tough. Chonda, I want to go back and let people know what's behind you?

Chonda Pierce: It's so sweet of you to ask that, Tim, because I think it's why I do what I do always. What I love is to get a crowd, to laugh and be excited. And then all of a sudden they hear my story and they go, "This is the same person we were just laughing with." And life is not always easy. It's good and bad days for all lives. But for me, I lost my big sister when she was 20. About 20 months later, I lost my only other sister, my little sister, she was 15. She had leukemia. My parents divorced in a real confusing and embarrassing, in one of those fallen preacher moments. And it's the kids that carry the scarlet letter. And then it wasn't long after I got married and had a great life. I felt like was on the zoom of, and the climbing of a comedy career.

And I lost my mother who was a lot of my material. I was diagnosed clinically depressed. I worked through that and I lost a child, a child that decided to walk away from the family and that was hard. And that child is still lost. And then the worst of it was I lost my man. And for 31 years we were married and he passed away and I thought it would be my undoing in my career. And here's the mercy and the grace of God who gives you the strength for your day. As thy day, so shall be your strength. I quit trying to worry about being strong enough for tomorrow's show. I just know that tonight, at E Women, God will give me the perfect grace and mercy and fun and frivolity and he'll put a joy in my spirit that only he can do. And then I'll worry about tomorrow, tomorrow. Now you have to live that way.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chonda, I often wonder what you think when you walk out on the stage and you see this sea of women, okay, or your audiences out there, and what you must think when you see them the first time you hit the stage. You know what I mean? What do you see in their eyes?

Chonda Pierce: I see, especially these days, and I've been on the road about six or eight concerts now, since I've started out after this COVID thing. I see a hunger and thirst to just be out of the house. But in my whole career, I see me. I see me sitting out there. I was the young mom that needed a weekend break. I am the wife that is hurt by a husband running astray or troubling with addiction. I am the young girl that can't figure out what she wants to be when she grows up and what she's chosen, her family's going, "What?" I am those women. I am those women. And so I see me and I try to think of what would I like to hear? What do I need in my spirit tonight, Lord? Feed me as I feed others.

The sweet thing, and that was another thing Minnie Pearl said to me is, "You got to love them and they'll love you back." And she used to say that to every young performer and she was talking about authenticity. We can spot a fake so quick.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah, you can.

Chonda Pierce: We may be taken in for a little bit by someone, but pretty soon they reveal themselves and God will quicken your spirit to let you know, "Uh-huh (affirmative). This isn't right." That's a good thing. That's a good thing to stay close to the Lord so you can discern what's the good thing to do here and what's the wrong ... Who's leading me down the wrong path? And sometimes we avoid that. We like to hang out with that fun girlfriend. And we realize, every time we get together, she's kind of leading me to the wrong spot on Friday night, yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: When you walk out on the stage, Chonda, do you have a script? I mean, do you know where you're going?

Chonda Pierce: Don't we all wish I did. Dr. Tim is being so kind because I can't believe I still have a job with E Women. I have been doing this for 27 years and I will say, I'm a comedian. I'm not a shrink. I'm not a psychologist. I'm not a public speaker.

Dr. Tim Clinton: But you're doing some therapy up on that stage.

Chonda Pierce: I do.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We're going to go there in a minute.

Chonda Pierce: Because I tell my own. And I have probably stepped over the line a few times. A few years ago, something happened. And you remember when it happened, I'm sure. Because I think we were in Lynchburg or somewhere like that. And you came off the stage and you said, I think you said, "You're funnier than I've ever heard you. And what's changed?" And I said, "I like myself. I like how I am. I am confident in nothing but God and what he can do in my life." That relaxation changed my comedy. Not that I got raunchier or edgier, but I just got where, you know what? I know my heart. And I know it is right with the Lord. And I know that he loves me. And so what comes out of my mouth tonight is just for fun and frivolity, and if you can't take that, then we might need to talk about what's going on in your heart.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chonda, but you do land the plane.

Chonda Pierce: I do land the plane.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I've never seen you walk offstage without you close the deal, if you will. You're there for a purpose. You know you want to make them laugh, but there's a message behind all this effort.

Chonda Pierce: I've had a million different managers and people try to pull me and push me to go do the comedy club route, to hit Hollywood. I remember the few little comedy clubs I did. I couldn't land the plane. You couldn't have any kind of a message other than take care of yourselves, goodnight, tip your waitress. But I do know that when I head out, I want it to be more than just the laugh. People are hurting. The only reason I know they buy tickets to see a Chonda Pierce concert is because they need a laugh. And if they need to laugh, that means there's a need or a void in their life.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah, it doth good like a medicine.

Chonda Pierce: Where you can open their heart. That's exactly right. And what greater medicine to leave them, then not with what the things that Chonda Pierce has been through, but what God can bring you through. And you shine the light on that and it's a good night. I've had to say this with Dr. Dobson, early on in my career, I did a video called Four-eyed Blonde. Not many of them have made it to Dobson Circle, but that one I did a song about I'm a woman, a parody, the verse. And I said, I can raise perfect children on the James Dobson plan. That was one of the lines in it. But anyway, it made the radio. He put it on the radio, he put the whole thing on the radio. It was an 80 minute long video. And he played it in like 20 minute increments and talked about it. This was 20 years ago. It was such a shot in the arm for my career. That video made it into the prison systems and women were being just delivered from knowing and how they feel and who they are and how God sees them. That was the point of that whole video, Four-eyed Blonde, is how God looks at us [crosstalk 00:16:35]

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chonda, I want wanted, everybody knows that you don't have a problem speaking your mind. And you love to talk even up on Facebook. You hold forums. I mean, you're flat getting after it and you'll push every button there is. You're a big champion for, I think, very foundational values in Christianity, the gospel of course. You are a big advocate for life. You're pro-life, you're very strong on religious liberty and conservative values. Chonda, that message resonating in your heart, where does it come from? Why are you so bold and strong on those issues when other people tend to be tentative and fearful? Dr. Dobson, you know has always been a champion.

Chonda Pierce: Right. I tell you, the number one thing that keeps me strong, is the Bible. I mean, it's just that, period. If you are going to be a Christ follower, I mean, a real ... Not a Sunday morning, let's get this and check this off the list, we went to church this morning, but I mean a real Christ follower and you want to dig into how he wants you to live, then the Bible is your blueprint. It is the word of God. It is the breath of God on your life. And there is something in there for every situation you're going through.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You bet.

Chonda Pierce: From every sin you've committed to every great thing that you're feeling to the guideline of how to raise your children, of what kind of spouse to be. It's the Bible. And if we're going to be Christ followers, we have to hug that thing like it is a lifeline, because it is. And when we steer away from that, when we begin to water that down, it leads to great confusion. I'll be honest with you, Dr. Tim, and I'm not a preacher, but I am with a group of people every night. And I watch the Holy Spirit lead through this broken vessel that I'm in. We are in a crossroads that we are either going to dig deeper and dive in, or we're going to be washed away like Dr. Seuss.

I got on Amazon yesterday and ordered every Dr. Seuss book I could because that's my childhood and my children's childhood. I'm telling you, you better get online and order every Bible you can get your hands on too, because that's next. If you're not careful, someone's going to say I am offended by the Bible being in the Holiday Inn drawer, or I'm offended by the Book of Mormon being in the Hyatt Regency drawer. Somebody's coming after all your religious things that keeps you connected to who God is in your life. And that's what's next.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chonda, I want to close this way, and our time is short, but related to mental health, I know you're a big champion against racism. You understand racial trauma, you understand violence. I'm talking now about domestic violence and abuse.

Chonda Pierce: Yes, I do.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You grew up abused as a little girl. You stand strong, you understand alcoholism and what it can do to a family. And as a result, you, your brother, you tag team, and you're serious about mental health. Chonda, this is where I really stand up and salute you, because that kind of a voice for such a time as this is so important. Tell us a little bit more about that ministry, what you're hoping to get done and speak a word of encouragement to people who wrestle with darkness, every day darkness and they just want to see some light.

Chonda Pierce: Now I, in my dealing with clinical depression, and when I was placed in that psychiatric hospital and it actually becomes a pretty funny story. But the truth of the matter is, I learned so much and God's grace and mercy. My shrink that took my case was a born again Christian. When I had heard most of my life, psychiatric medicines are just not good for you. I even had a lady come up and she said, "I think you shouldn't talk about your antidepressants. That makes your faith look weak." And I told her, "Well, you need to take your glasses off and drive home or take off your girdle and let the Holy Spirit suck that cellulite out of your hips." Probably wasn't a really great comeback to her, but it just ticked me off in Jesus' name. And so I am a great fan of those who are smart enough to go get help and clarity in their mental illness.

Depression hurts. It's painful. You feel like you've got the flu. There is a physical manifestation that happens when your body is depressed. And to be honest,

depression, I feel like is a lot of foundation of our racism, our anger, our frustration is because people are depressed with themselves. And so they become this part of humanity that is just hurting one another. All that being said there is hope. The Bible, one of my favorite verses is John 6:63, "The flesh accounts for nothing, but the spirit is everything." So in other words, God knows these temporary vessels that we ... When I get to heaven, I'll be a size 2. I'm going to be so cute. But so this is such a temporary pile of blubber, right, COVID-19 blubber right here. But when this part is gone, I will still be a spiritual creature that loves God and my heart will be pure and my mind will be healthy. Why do we not consider our minds just as important as our beating hearts or arthritis or our diabetes?

Dr. Tim Clinton: I think people are more and more now.

Chonda Pierce: I do too.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Because of voices like yours.

Chonda Pierce: Aw, thank you.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chonda, now it makes sense that you would do a tour, "Laughing in the Dark."

Chonda Pierce: Exactly.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Now, when you bring all these pieces together, I get it. I see what the message is all about. And man, is it resonating? Ah, it's just such a beautiful thing to watch you do your work up on stage all for the glory of the Lord.

Chonda Pierce: Praise God.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah, Chonda, let's close this way. A word of encouragement to those who are listening today, who they needed to hear this. They are hoping that God will bring a better day.

Chonda Pierce: Yes, well, the great thing is he always does. God always brings great. And I want to encourage every listener out there, there is a counselor, a friend, there is a pastor, there's someone in your community that you can unload on. The greatest thing about even saying the words, "I feel depressed," or "I made a mistake" or "I'm wrong," or that confession of sin, it's about hearing your own voice. Voice some things that God can take care of, because everything that's drug out of the dark into the light has no more power over you.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. On behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, their family, the entire Family Talk family, all of those at the James Dobson Family Institute, we salute you. We thank you, Chonda, for joining us and thanks for bringing an encouraging word.

Chonda Pierce: Thank you, Dr. Tim.

Roger Marsh: Well, we hope you've been encouraged by Dr. Tim Clinton's conversation with comedian Chonda Pierce here on Family Talk. As you heard, Chonda's life hasn't always been all sunshine and laughter. And yet the Lord has used her charm and wit to bring joy and hope to countless people. What a picture of God's redeeming love that is. In Ephesians chapter 2, verse 10, the apostle Paul writes, "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which he prepared in advance for us to do." God had a plan for Chonda Pierce before she was born. And you know what, friend? The same is true for you and me as well.

Now, if you'd like to learn more about Chonda, her books, DVDs, or comedy shows that are starting to book as the country is opening back up again, you can find information about all that and more at the broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org. Just remember D-R jamesdobson.org/broadcast. Or feel free to give us a call. We are always here for you 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to answer questions about Family Talk or suggest a resource or to pray with you. You can reach us at (877) 732-6825, that's (877) 732-6825. And don't forget, Mother's Day is just around the corner. And right now, as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in support of Family Talk, you'll receive a copy of the Celebrating Moms CD. Now this CD features three popular broadcasts that honor and encourage mothers. It's a great gift for any mom in your life. So to get your copy, make sure to give us a call at (877) 732-6825, that's (877) 732-6825.

Thanks so much for listening to Family Talk today. I'm Roger Marsh and from all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we hope you have a blessed and wonderful day.

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

Dr. James Dobson: Hello, everyone. Do you need help dealing with the everyday tasks of raising a family? I'm James Dobson here and if you do, I hope you'll tune in to our next edition of Family Talk. Our main purpose in this ministry is to put tools into your hands that will strengthen your marriage and help you raise your kids. Hope to see you right here next time for another edition of Family Talk.