



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** I'm Alive: Standing with the Poor and the Oppressed

**Guest(s):** Sarah Vienna

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Dr. James Dobson: Well, greetings everyone, and welcome to Family Talk. This is a listener-supported ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and thank you for joining us for this broadcast. I think it's a very important one. I want to begin today by reading a few words from Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. Once you hear what I'm about to read, you'll understand where we're going today. I'll begin with Matthew 25, verse 34.

"Then the King will say to those on his right hand, 'Come, you blessed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you took me in, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and take you in, or naked and clothed you? Or when did we see you sick or in prison and come to you?' And the King will answer and will say to them, 'Assuredly I say to you, in as much as you did it to one of the least of these, my brethren, you did for me.'

And we're going to talk today about some of the least of these, our brethren, especially children in the country of Romania. Many of them are orphans, many of them have no future, many of them are hungry, many of them are sick. And we're going to talk today with a woman who was here with us as our guest nine years ago. The guest was Sarah Vienna, and we talked that day about her great heart for the people of Romania, and especially the orphan children.

Sarah, you went to Romania with Youth With A Mission on a six week trip. I recall that was back in 2002. And you caught the vision of what was going on there. Sarah, I don't think I'll ever forget the way you described the orphans that you saw in that first encounter. Describe it for us.

Sarah Vienna: Yeah. It was in 2005 when my colleague and I were asked to sing Christmas carols at the Braşov State Children's Hospital. It wasn't an orphanage, but it was similar to an orphanage, becoming a holding tank until these social workers can find proper homes for these kids that were abandoned.

And when we walked on these floors, these hospital floors, we found these children alone, wrapped in several layers of rags used as diapers, bald spots on the back of their heads, and not one cry because they learned that crying did not answer their need.

Dr. James Dobson: Whenever you hear many children within a room and they're not crying, there's trouble. Crying is a message.

Sarah Vienna: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: Crying is a healthy response. These children didn't cry.

Sarah Vienna: Right. Can you imagine these kids getting to that point, reaching this point of silence because no one was there to answer their need?

We know that touch is so important. Research has determined that even down to cellular brain development, a child, a human being, needs touch in order to properly develop.

So this is why it's so important that we run our volunteer programs in Romania, because children, babies need touch in order to survive.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, in the 13th century, King Frederick II conducted an experiment with 50 infants to see what language they would speak if they never had an opportunity to hear the spoken word. So he assigned foster mothers to bathe them and suckle the children, but he forbade them to fondle, pet or even talk to their charges. And the experiment ended in failure because all 50 infants died. And since then, it's been documented conclusively that babies who aren't touched or cuddled often fail to thrive. That's what you witnessed there in a Romanian orphanage, wasn't it?

Sarah Vienna: Right. We're talking about God's creation, God's precious creation, and the value of life.

The Bible speaks about children being a gift from the Lord, and I just can't imagine not understanding the value and not understanding the precious gift when you give birth to a baby. And to give that baby up and just say, "Oh, I can't handle this baby. I can't take care of this child", I can't imagine it.

But this is where God can intervene and bring back that initial love.

Dr. James Dobson: And now you have been working in those areas.

Sarah Vienna: Yeah. We're volunteering at the Braşov State Children's Hospital. So we run an international volunteer program five days a week where volunteers from around the world can come and hold, feed, change, cuddle these babies, these

children who so desperately need to be touched. You know, our volunteers become like surrogate parents.

Many of these children that are being abandoned or temporarily abandoned come from the Roma, otherwise known as gypsy villages. The Roma ethnicity is considered one of the most persecuted ethnicities in Europe. They're considered country-less. And Romania has one of the largest populations of these people that live in segregated-

Dr. James Dobson: They're looked down on.

Sarah Vienna: Yes. Yes. They're highly segregated, they're not educated, they live in poverty, they're dropping out of school. And we need to pay attention to this ethnicity and educate them.

And also teach them that God loves them and God doesn't care about their skin color. God doesn't care if they don't have the fanciest iPhone. God cares for these people and wants them to know that he loves them unconditionally.

Dr. James Dobson: Sarah, describe in more detail for us those family situations in Roma culture. We know them as gypsies, and those of us who have been there and seen them on the street begging, little children all around, they deliberately produce more children because they get a small stipend from the government-

Sarah Vienna: That's correct.

Dr. James Dobson: ... If they do. But that runs out and then you have up to six or more children per family on average. Is that correct?

Sarah Vienna: That's correct.

Dr. James Dobson: That's the statistics, right?

Sarah Vienna: Yeah. The average Roma family has between six to eight children.

Dr. James Dobson: And they can't take care of them.

Sarah Vienna: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: They don't have the money to feed them or take care of them. So all they can do is really beg. It's a tragic situation.

So many of the children in those orphanages that you're talking about come from that community.

Sarah Vienna: That's correct.

Dr. James Dobson: And what is being done for them?

Sarah Vienna: Well, nonprofits like ours, we're teaching them, we're educating them.

So Firm Foundations Romania, we run an afterschool program for children from preschool age to seventh grade. We have 170 children enrolled in our programs, and we're meeting them where they're at educationally. We're teaching them about the foundations of the Bible, teaching them that they are valued and they have a calling and they have a purpose. And we-

Dr. James Dobson: You teach them about Jesus.

Sarah Vienna: We teach them about Jesus. Oh yes, they love to-

Dr. James Dobson: They will allow you to do that.

Sarah Vienna: Yes. Yes. We can teach them anything from the Bible. The children love to sing Bible songs. They love to learn new stories from the Bible. Learning about Moses and David, their smiles, their smiles are so bright when they can sing about the joy of the Lord and the love of a savior that loves them unconditionally. This is what life is about, teaching children that they're loved by God.

Dr. James Dobson: Sarah, you are not married and you have given your life to this cause. Where does that passion come from?

Sarah Vienna: I am driven by the Holy Spirit. And my passion comes from standing up for truth, being the voice of the voiceless. And I do this through the power of music. So I'm writing music to share about humanity.

Dr. James Dobson: Your mother is a musician, isn't she?

Sarah Vienna: Yes. My mother was a musician. She writes her own music, and she's still writing to this day. She taught me how to harmonize, she taught me how to play the guitar. She taught me about the need to stand up for truth, and she introduced books about heroes of faith, like Corrie Ten Boom and Gladys Aylward and Smith Wigglesworth. And probably you.

Dr. James Dobson: And you use your guitar and your music to teach the children to sing about Jesus?

Sarah Vienna: Right. I use my guitar to share a message.

You know that music is so powerful.

Dr. James Dobson: It is.

Sarah Vienna: And I believe and I know that music can save a life and it can stir action deep within someone's soul where words cannot do alone.

So I'm writing music about experiences; if it's about a volunteer or if it's about a child that has felt abandoned or rejected. Or about my own circumstances. You know, we all are going through this life and we're in these experiences that sometimes we need to just stop and pray. And so I'm writing music to go deeper into this message and deeper into our feelings so that we can make choices that God wants us to make.

Dr. James Dobson: Are the Roma people open to you? Do they resent you being there? How do they look at you? How do they see you?

Sarah Vienna: Oh, they respect us. We've been working with them since 2005. Whenever we drive through their village, they are always waving to us. And of course, they always want to stop us and say hello.

And we don't want to just give, give, give. We want to teach them to stand on their own two feet and educate them.

Dr. James Dobson: You know them by name?

Sarah Vienna: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: You know the children by name?

Sarah Vienna: Oh, yes. Our organization truly has become a friend to these people.

Dr. James Dobson: Tell us what the organization's name is.

Sarah Vienna: Firm Foundations Romania.

Dr. James Dobson: And you are funded by gifts from America?

Sarah Vienna: Yep. From America, from Canada, from Germany; primarily volunteers that come through our organization and volunteer. They go back to their churches, their home groups, their companies, and they say, "Hey, you have to hear about this organization that's transforming lives in the country of Romania."

Dr. James Dobson: I told you when we were chatting in my office that last time I was in Europe, I don't think I was in Romania, but we were in various places in Europe, Italy, primarily, and there were a lot of what we call gypsies on the street, begging, desperate people. They had nothing. I mean, you talk about 'the least of these, my brothers,' they would qualify for that from my point of view.

And the women would be holding sleeping babies, and they'd hold them all day. And you know they had to be drugged in order for a baby to sleep all the time. That's not natural.

And also, young children were sleeping on the street. But imagine what that does to child development, what that does to intellectual development.

My heart went out to these people. And there are millions and millions of them, aren't there?

Sarah Vienna: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: And you're dealing primarily with Romania.

Sarah Vienna: Correct. And this happens worldwide, you know, begging and people who reach such a low and desperation that they have to go out to the public and put their hand out.

You know, why I believe volunteering is so important is because we stand with the poor like Jesus would do. And it is so important to reach out and help humanity, help our brother.

And if it's overseas, if that's where God is calling you to reach out, it is so important. This is what life is about. We're on this earth for so short of a period, and what are we doing for our fellow man? Always comes back to the value of life, God's most precious creation.

Dr. James Dobson: And in fact, you are very strong in your pro-life beliefs, aren't you?

Sarah Vienna: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: And you teach that.

Sarah Vienna: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Are they open to that at all? I mean, they probably don't even know what contraception is.

Sarah Vienna: No. They don't fully understand contraception. And what we're teaching them is the value of life. We're teaching them the biblical passages in the Bible that ... You know, teaching them that children are a gift from the Lord and that they should be respected.

Sadly, Romania has a high amount of abortions, but this can change through the power of prayer. And so we are raising awareness that the babies inside their womb, they're alive and they want to breathe and they want to see and they want to be loved.

Dr. James Dobson: The general population of Romania limits their family, they're not required by the government, but themselves, to two children. That's average.

Sarah Vienna: That's the average.

Dr. James Dobson: And we can imagine what happens to the rest of them.

Sarah Vienna: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: Abortion is very, very common.

Sarah Vienna: Correct.

Dr. James Dobson: Are the people there open at all to the pro-life message?

Sarah Vienna: Personally, I think everyone is open, it's just making a decision out of feeling versus sometimes what their spirit says.

You know, the country of Romania, they're open for change, but sometimes people make decisions out of desperation or-

Dr. James Dobson: Like, "How will I deal with another child?"

Sarah Vienna: Right. Right.

So where I come in with my pro-life message is not out of judgment, it's out of having this person, this mother, this father, understand the value of life that they created together inside of the womb, and that this is God's precious, precious creation and that God knows them even before they were created.

You know, Psalm 139 is one of my favorite passages of Scripture. David talks about how God says, "I've knitted you in the womb." And I can just imagine God just actually knitting these cells together, forming a baby, and just knitting us together. And we have to create awareness and understanding for those that may be blinded; this is precious.

Dr. James Dobson: Talk about the state of the church in Romania. The Orthodox Church is predominant.

Sarah Vienna: Correct.

Dr. James Dobson: And as far as a Bible believing Christian expression, that's not very evident, is it?

Sarah Vienna: Right. Well, 96% of the country of Romania is Orthodox, and there's a very small percentage of evangelical churches.

But I love sharing with Romanian Orthodox that we can go directly to our Heavenly Father.

Dr. James Dobson: They don't teach it.

Sarah Vienna: Right. They don't teach it.

And Christianity is really an ... It's an easy faith because we can go directly to our Heavenly Father if we have a need or if we need to ask forgiveness. We don't have to go to a building. We have the Holy Spirit.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, Shirley and I, in our personal devotions, often will start our prayer by saying, "Lord, how unbelievable that the king of the universe who built everything there is, knows everything, cares about us, knows our thoughts and our feelings and our fears, and the things that are oppressing us." He knows every bit of that.

We were reading just recently the opening chapters of Exodus, and the people in chapter two were oppressed by the Egyptians, and they were fearful and they were slaves, and they were whipped and going through all these difficult things. And it says, "The Lord saw their plea and heard their cry", I'm not quoting the Scripture now, "But sent Moses to rescue them." The Lord heard their cry.

Sarah Vienna: Hmm.

Dr. James Dobson: Isn't that amazing?

And when we talk, we say, "Lord, we find it hard to believe, but we do, that you're in this room. You're listening to us. You care about us and every other person around the world."

You're trying to teach that, aren't you?

Sarah Vienna: Right. And Psalm 82-3 really represents our ministry, where it says, "Defend the weak, the fatherless. Uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed."

God wants us to minister to those in need, those who have been abandoned, rejected, pushed down. And that's really our motto for Firm Foundations Romania, and for Sarah Vienna Ministries through the power of music; defending humanity.

Dr. James Dobson: Sarah, we only have a few minutes left. There are two things I want to do with it. One is, let people know, how do they get in touch with you?

Sarah Vienna: They can reach me at [sarahvienna.com](http://sarahvienna.com), and our ministry in Romania, [firmfoundationromania.com](http://firmfoundationromania.com).



Dr. James Dobson: And it's V-I-E-N-N-A?

Sarah Vienna: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: And they can reach you and make arrangements for you to come?

Sarah Vienna: Yep.

Dr. James Dobson: And if people would like you to come and speak and sing and give your message, they could contact you by the email address that we just gave?

Sarah Vienna: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I can't let you leave without singing for us. You're going to sing your own composition, I'm Alive.

Now this story was written from the viewpoint of a baby inside the mother's womb saying, "I'm alive. Give me a chance."

(singing) I am here deep inside you. You can't see me, but I'm alive. I am small, but I'm growing to be like you, I'm alive. So give me a chance, give me a chance, cause I'm alive.

I want to breathe, I want to see, I want to feel you closely. I want to run. I want to speak. I want to hold you tenderly. So give me a chance, give me a chance, cause I'm alive.

You don't know who I am, but I love you, I'm alive. And you have a choice for me to go, but I want you, I'm alive. So give me a chance, give me a chance, cause I'm alive.

I want to breathe; I want to see and I want to feel you closely. I want to run. I want to speak. I want to hold you tenderly. So give me a chance, give me a chance, cause I'm alive.

I'm alive. I'm alive. Yeah. Yeah. I will breathe. I will see. I will feel you, feel you, feel you, tenderly. Cause I'm alive. I'm alive. Thank you, Jesus. Yeah.

I am here deep inside you; you can't see me but I'm alive.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, Sarah, that is absolutely beautiful. You have a wonderful voice.

Does that song have a Romanian version to it?

Sarah Vienna: Not yet, but it's in the works.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you speak Romanian?

Sarah Vienna: I speak a little bit. Yes, I do.

Dr. James Dobson: And you're writing in their native language?

Sarah Vienna: I am starting to do that, yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, you're a brave lady.

Sarah Vienna: Thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: And I appreciate you taking the time to come and share this ministry.

It all really grew out of YWAM, didn't it?

Sarah Vienna: That was the start.

Dr. James Dobson: That was the start.

Sarah Vienna: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: We have mutual friends. I'm speaking of John and Marylois Gibson. They're the ones that told me about you. They have a great passion and heart for Romania, and they introduced me to you eight years ago.

And they're listening today. Those are great people with a heart for the Lord and for children, and the children of Romania especially. So I want to give them my best regards today and thank them for calling you to my attention again.

Sarah Vienna: Thank you so much.

Roger Marsh: What an incredibly compassionate interview featuring Ms. Sarah Vienna and our own Dr. James Dobson here on Family Talk.

If you missed any part of today's program or if you'd like to share it with a friend, just go to our new app. You can find it at the App Store or at Google Play. Just search 'Dr. James Dobson' or 'Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.'.

And remember, you can also hear this interview in its entirety again on our website broadcast page. That's [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk).

In 2005, Sarah Vienna was asked to sing Christmas carols in a Romanian children's hospital. To her dismay, many of the kids there had been abandoned by their families because of desperate poverty. They'd been left alone with literally rags for diapers. And worst of all, because the nurses had ignored them, these babies simply didn't cry.

As you just heard, Sarah has been sharing her heart and the work of her ministry, Firm Foundations Romania. She cites Psalm 82, verse three as her mission, and I quote, "Defend the weak, the fatherless. Uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed."

Won't you pray for the people throughout Eastern Europe right now? They are suffering mightily with the terrible outbreak of war and violence there.

Now, to learn more about Sarah or Firm Foundations Romania, just go to our broadcast page, [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). That's [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). There are excellent resources posted there every day.

And thank you for your prayers and your faithful financial support. It's because of your generosity that we can continue helping families and fight for life.

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I'm Roger Marsh, and on behalf of Dr. James Dobson and Dr. Tim Clinton, we wish you God's richest blessings to you and your family. Join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

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

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hi, everyone. Dr. Tim Clinton here.

When you think about your family and where they'll be when you're no longer living, are you worried? Are you confident? You're hopeful? What kind of a legacy are you leaving for your children and their children right now?

Here at Family Talk, we're committed to helping you understand the legacy that you're leaving your family. Join us today at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) You're going to find helpful insights, tips, and advice from Dr. Dobson himself.

And remember, your legacy matters.