



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Raw Faith: What Happens When God Picks a Fight

**Guest(s):** Kasey Van Norman

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Dr. Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk, which is a listener supported production of the James Dobson Family Institute. If you listen every day, you're tired of hearing me say that, but it's a fact. I'm your host, Dr. James Dobson. Thanks for tuning in.

I want to begin our program today by reading a scripture from Isaiah 43. These are the words of the Lord to the prophet. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. When you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned. The flames will not set you ablaze."

Many Christians read this and similar passages and believe that our faith somehow makes us immune to pain and trials. That's simply not true. Hardships and difficulty will inevitably come into our lives and families, if not along the way, then certainly in the events that close out our lives. However, God does promise to be with us through it all, and that concept is what we're focusing on with today's broadcast.

In just a moment, we're going to listen to an interview recorded by my colleague, Dr. Tim Clinton. His guest today is author Kasey Van Norman. Her story is so powerful because she came to a point where her faith was drastically tested and she had to decide whether or not to continue trusting in God. I don't want to take anything away from her testimony, so let's begin. Here is Dr. Tim Clinton to further introduce his guest on this edition of Family Talk.

Dr. Clinton: Our special guest today, Kasey Van Norman. She's the founder and president of Kasey Van Norman Ministries in College Station, Texas. She's the author of the book and Bible study called *Named by God*.

Kasey's a full-time counselor at Still Creek Ranch. It's a nonprofit home and a Christian school in Bryan, Texas. It's a place where kids who need a safe and loving environment can go.

She's also an advocate and a counselor for Restore Her Ministry. It's a branch of Still Creek that rescues and extends Christ's love to victims of sex trafficking. Kasey lives with her husband, Justin, and their two kids in College Station, Texas.

Our topic today, Raw Faith: What Happens, again, When God Picks a Fight?

Kasey Van Norman: Man, it is an honor to be here.

Dr. Clinton: There's something about you. You've got some extra juice in you. You've got some extra fire inside. But Kasey, what was it like growing up? I mean, did you always have that kind of energy and just dynamo to you?

Kasey Van Norman: You know, God always wired me pretty type A. I definitely had a lot of passion. Just passion can go really, really good or really, really bad, depending on who's guiding it. For the majority of my life, I was guiding that passion and that fire on my own terms, and it took me in a lot of bad places.

I grew up in a very dysfunctional home. I had a lot of emotional abuse, physical abuse. Had an alcoholic father and saw a lot of things that I didn't know how to process as a child. I took those really deep woundings into my teenage years. I was a very rebellious teenager. All the while during the day, going to church, playing the Christian part. Really had everybody fooled, including myself, that I was a good Christian girl, and when the lights went out, living a complete double life just as a hypocrite, and a phony, and a fake. So busy doing the things of God that I missed God.

I was a cutter. I was very sexually promiscuous. I pretty much dabbled with anything trying to find that high and that healing in all of the things external.

I took it into my marriage. Five years into my marriage to just a wonderful man who saved himself for marriage, who loved me dearly, I had an affair, committed adultery and betrayed him. For three years inside my marriage was in and out of this affair.

God wrecked me for that. Brought me to a place where I could no longer even hold the lie and the sin. I attempted to take my life, because that really seemed like something that was going to benefit everyone. I attempted to take my life after I had a really rough time with the church. We were involved in church, and instead of coming alongside us, the church pushed us out, and I really had the scarlet letter on my head. Just one of the most horrific seasons of my life, and all this before the age of 30.

The Lord being gracious and faithful despite my unfaithfulness, He pulled me up out of that suicide attempt that would have succeeded on human terms, but He intervened in a divine way and he brought me up out of that place so that I would never be able to boast in that. That I could never look to any other man

or any other things to bring me up out of that place. But it was only His mercy, love, and grace alone.

He redeemed my marriage. He restored my marriage. My husband showed the forgiveness of Jesus Christ right there in front of me. For the very first time in my life, I began to grasp and understand the forgiveness that Jesus had for me despite what I did. It was a beautiful thing.

We were trucking along, and God was being so good to us. Our children are healthy and well, and we're doing all these things in the church, wonderful things. I get the phone call at the age of 31 that I had cancer, that I had incurable cancer. Here we are with this title, *What Happens When God Picks a Fight?*

Dr. Clinton: Kasey, I want to make sure everyone understands this. The redemptive power of God is alive in your life. You're kind of like on an explosive vertical climb before this phone call. I mean seriously, in Christianity, you're going. The message is unbelievable. Women are just gravitating to you. Then, what was it, October 25th I think, 2011, the phone call comes.

Kasey Van Norman: Right.

Dr. Clinton: Your gynecologist does an ultrasound. Take us into what he told you.

Kasey Van Norman: Yeah. All I knew before getting the phone call that I had cancer is that I was supposed to tell my story. That's about all God would give me is just tell your story. Tell your story. So I just started doing that and inviting people into this place with me, and it's breathtaking. It will blow your mind. The stories that I hear when I allow people into that place with me.

I'm 31 years old, and I have this horrific pain in my side. It's just debilitating. Long story short, find out that I had an ovary just completely rupture. They rushed me, did an emergency hysterectomy. They find while they're in there a golf ball sized mass in my abdomen.

My surgeon at the time, praise the Lord, was just a godly woman. That's a whole divine story in itself I don't have time to tell, but He was just speaking into her ear telling her to get it, to scrape it out, to spend hours. She was being mocked and laughed at in the operating room by the other surgeons saying, "You're a fool. Just leave it there. It's nothing."

Come to find out, it's lymphoma. It's Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, stage three, incurable, the incurable kind. Immediately I go, as anybody who's had cancer or struggling with that or has been through chemotherapy, you just feel like cattle being prodded through a pen. Suddenly, you're doing chemo, and you don't have any hair, and you feel like a semi-truck has hit you, and you can't get up out of bed, and you're not the person that you were just a few months ago. That

was what knocked me out from under myself so quickly is just really the chemo, because I was pretty asymptomatic before, I didn't have any symptoms of cancer. Then suddenly to be so sick and really dying from the toxins that are in my body now.

Dr. Clinton: Kasey, hope was fading on you, too.

Kasey Van Norman: Yeah.

Dr. Clinton: Talk to people who are wrestling, Kasey, just for a moment. The wind isn't just knocked out of them. They've been sucker punched so hard, and they feel so alone and so lost, and the emotion is just everywhere. It's bouncing all over the place, and they don't know what to do or say. What was it like for you in that moment?

Kasey Van Norman: You know, Isaiah 43 is what I want to speak over people right now that feel like they're speaking to God and he's not answering, that they feel like how are they supposed to believe in this loving God, and it just feels like he's not there. They just feel overwhelmed by life, by disease, by betrayal, by relationships. Isaiah 43 says, "I've called you by name. You are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you. Through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, and the flame will not consume you."

The interesting thing about this verse is that it's God saying "when all of this happens." It's not a question of will trial, or suffering, or pain come. God is loving and gracious in the fact that he says, "This is going to happen to you, pain, and trial, and suffering. You're going to feel like you have been sucker punched, like I have picked a fight with you."

But the most beautiful thing that completely changed my life was understanding that this was God. This, all of this, all this stuff that the world doesn't want to recognize, and wants to push God in a corner, and wants to just say, "He doesn't do those things. He's not a God of pain. He's not a God of suffering or trial." Then who is He? If He's not a God of all of those things, then who is God? Because that's not the creator that I want to believe.

I want to believe in the creator that is the author of all of that. That's what gets me up every day, that He reassures us and He promises that it's not going to consume you. It's not going to overwhelm you in so much that you're not going to feel my presence. I promise. He promises us that He will steady us. Life is going to be life and the waves are going to come, but in that He is the anchor that grounds us and centers us, and we have hope in that. We have hope and we can rest assured in that, and that's beautiful to me.

Dr. Clinton: But most of us, Kasey, feel lost though. We start thinking that God isn't there, He's not there for us, that He's not going to show up or whatever. He's not going

to quote, "Be in it." We've heard all the messages. God isn't going to keep you from it, but He'll rescue you in it and more. It's like, "God, when's the cavalry coming? When are you going to come down here?"

By the way, in your new book, *Raw Faith* ... By the way, I've heard Kasey speak many times. This woman can light it up like very few I've ever heard in my life. Kasey, listen, you go to the woman with the issue of blood for a moment. Why did you go to her? Because it's about faith, right?

Kasey Van Norman: Right. Yeah. I mean, I went to her because she was the least likely candidate to trust God. She was the least likely person that I could find after all that she'd been through, 12 years of pain, bleeding, suffering, doctors telling her no, people rejecting her. If you look back at the context, her husband had probably left her. She probably smelled really bad, had no money, probably from house to house. Who knows what she was having to do to survive?

This is the woman that just hears that Jesus is in town. I mean, she doesn't even know anything about Jesus. She wasn't the elite. She wasn't privy to that knowledge about who Jesus was, that he was the savior of the world, the God made flesh. She just hears that this guy is in town and that he's been healing people. She is saying in herself, "If I can just touch the hem of his robe, then I will be healed."

It is that faith that will change us. That's raw faith. That is where we are completely laid bare. We have nothing else. We have no one else. That is exactly where God wants to take us, to that place.

She believes, and she finds him, and she touches, and she pushes her way through the crowd. You know she's sweating, and she's bleeding, and she's throbbing in pain and reeling. She just touches the hem of his robe and she is healed, because Jesus in that moment acknowledged that faith, that faith, which was just as small as a mustard seed. That's incredible to me.

Dr. Clinton: But there's a battle in the mind though, Kasey. At the same time, it's like, "Lord, I'm believing. I'm praying. I'm reaching." But there was something unique about her though, Kasey, wasn't there? Probably a lot of people when he's going through the crowd are pressing and they're touching him, but he said, "Who touched me?" Something happened when she reached, right? There must've been something different about her, or there was something different about the way she was perceiving all this, or him, or something. Is there?

Kasey Van Norman: Absolutely. That's the whole goal and the whole vision of *Raw Faith*. I just picture her pushing through the crowd, pushing through the crowd. She couldn't turn around. There was no way back. She was there, and she was completely laid bare. There was nothing else for her to turn to. In that moment, when the power surged out from Jesus into her and he experienced that, I do

believe ... I mean, you know there were other people touching him, other people crowding around him and pulling at his clothes.

Dr. Clinton: Right, right.

Kasey Van Norman: But it was her. It was her touch that released his power, that he felt, that he experienced on such an intimate level. I believe it was that vulnerable, raw place that I do believe God honors.

Dr. Clinton: Kasey, you don't have a problem with doubt. Yeah, I was reading in your book, and you've wrestled with God a lot. Just because you wrestle with God doesn't mean that you don't have, I guess, that kind of faith you were just talking about, right?

Kasey Van Norman: You know, that's where I just really want to encourage and speak life into people is that God is not surprised by our doubt. It's just like Peter standing there in the waves with him. We look at Peter and we think, "Oh, he took his eyes off of Jesus and he began to sink." Well, the Bible never tells us that Peter took his eyes off of Jesus. The Bible just says that Peter saw the waves.

We're looking at Jesus, but in our periphery we see the waves. It doesn't mean that we take our eyes off of Jesus. We still love him and we still want more of him. We want to know him deeply, but we see the waves. I think that's just the point is that that is where he meets us in the waves. The process is the point, not the destination, because God wants us to know Him based on who He is, not what He can do for us.

That's real faith. That's the faith that He honors. That's the faith that will change us, give us satisfaction, abundance. It doesn't mean that we're not going to doubt. I go over in the book what toxic doubt looks like.

Dr. Clinton: Right.

Kasey Van Norman: That's the difference. There's a toxic doubt that's very condemning that's from us, or from Satan, or from the world, and it's a condemning doubt. Then there's a doubt that's a simple wrestling with God on things that we just are not sure about, but it doesn't mean that we're not looking straight on into his eyes. He is with us in that place, showing us more of who he is every day. I mean, don't you think the Israelites felt that way as they're wandering for 40 years? I mean, we know they experienced doubt. But to wrestle with doubt, it's okay. It's okay.

Dr. Clinton: It's the real raw stuff. Yeah, it's the kind of journey where you realize God's bigger, Kasey, than your emotions and your frustration. You're just a human being trying to make sense of a world that's not the way it's supposed to be. But if you'll step back for a moment, you can also begin to see where God serendipitously drops into your life, those moments that remind you that He's there.

I'm thinking about November 29th, 2011. There was a young man named Micah Joel in the ER room. Tell us about what happened.

Kasey Van Norman: I was rushed into the emergency room. They thought I had a blood clot. Really thought I was dying from the chemo, had an allergic reaction. I was rushed into the emergency room. I just felt like I was on my death bed, just felt horrible, having such a bad day.

Lo and behold, a guy walks in, a young nurse in training walks in named Micah Joel. God just used him just as a sweet reminder as he walks in and he begins to tell me his story. His story was horrific. He'd been diagnosed with a brain tumor. He had surgery and had this tumor removed, and they were telling him now he still only had months to live. But this guy was just, I mean, so on a high of joy, it just flooded out of him into the room and it spilled over onto me. In that moment that God would be loving enough and gracious enough to send me Micah Joel.

Then just a few months later sitting in my bed, just really believing that I was dying, and wanted to take myself out, and just I couldn't do this anymore, my daughter, my at that time six-year-old daughter walks in at 11:00 PM out of the blue and says, "Mommy, I love Jesus." I get emotional every time. "I love Jesus, and I want him to be the Lord of my life, and I want to serve him the rest of my life. I'm a sinner, and I know that I'm not good, but I know that in Jesus, he makes me good. I know that in him are good things, and everything for the rest of my life is for him." It's unbelievable, in the middle of the night.

It's just these reminders that God is who He says He is. It is not always our circumstance. It is not what we can see, what we are going through. God is faithful despite what we see and when we are faithless.

Dr. Clinton: Kasey, what I love about you too is you'll normalize reality, denial, depression, discouragement. It's easy to go in those directions and get lost in them.

I love this story. February 3rd, 2012. Why it caught my attention was February 3rd is my birthday. On that day, you're in a hellacious place. In the closet in your room, God shows you something again, tucked away. He had a gift for you for that moment. It was your mom's journals. Tell us about it.

Kasey Van Norman: You know, I lost my mom to cancer two years before I was diagnosed with cancer. She was 50 years old, a beautiful woman who loved the Lord. A few years before she passed, she would write in her journal all of her struggles and all of her things.

On that day specifically, that February 3rd day, I just remember it so vividly. I was again just wrestling and wanted so ... I remember just being in my closet, sitting there. I remember trying to just do laundry. I just wanted to get the laundry done so that I could say that I was still a mother, and a wife, and I could

do a load of laundry. Even that task that had been so simple to me, it was so hard.

I'm sitting in the closet, crying, sobbing as I fold each little piece of underwear for my son and the t-shirts. I'm sitting there, and I remember just slamming my fist on the floor and screaming, "I want my mom. I just want to talk to my mom. I want to call her on the phone and say, 'How did you do this, mom? How did you get through this?'" I was just so mad. I was just so angry with God that she was gone, that I couldn't talk to her now that I was going through the similar path.

I look over to the left a little bit, and there at the bottom of my closet under all my clothes, sitting right next to me where all of her journals, and right there pulled open. I talk about it in a book, and I give this specific journal entry she wrote that day, but it was just specific to what I would have asked her. It was a specific response that she would have given me in that moment, just what her struggles were, and the hope, and the power that God was speaking into her life despite her circumstance. I just learned that it is through the pain, through the fire, through the trials, the depression, the doubt, it is through those places where he shows himself to us in those ways,

Dr. Clinton:

Kasey, we're battling time and I want to bring this back to our listeners. I just have a feeling somebody, no, there are somebodies out there right now, and they're lost and they're crying out. By the way, some of them are trying to get everything right in their life, because they believe if they do everything right that somehow God will show up.

The Lord loves righteousness, but Kasey, you bring this thing to closure by being what you call as anti-religious, and you focus on hope, and you talk about God. I mean, bring it home for us. Right in the midst of it all, all the pain, all the suffering, all the stuff that's going on, speak to our hearts.

Kasey Van Norman:

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness," 2 Corinthians 12. Please, those of you who are going through these places, and maybe you're just listening right now and you're just bawling because you don't understand why He would betray you, or why He would disappoint you, or the hurt, or the pain, or the abuse, or the abandonment, or the neglect. I just want you to understand that in weakness, God's power is made perfect. His grace is sufficient. Cry out to Him and He will, He will show up. Just know that he works out of redeemed desires. He will give you the desires of His heart, and they will guide you and they will center you, and you will claim that, and you will believe that.

I see it every single day where I work and live with these kids, the trauma, the abuse of the children that we bring in, what they have gone through. They are the people that will change the world, because that's what people in the Bible, the people who have gone through tremendous pain, and agony, and



disappointment. He will change the world through those people, the broken, bleeding, raw people of the world.

Dr. Clinton: Our special guest today has been Kasey van Norman.

Last night, I opened my dad's Bible, which by the way was in my closet. As I opened up the front page of it, I thought of a man who journeyed alone as a pastor in the hills of Pennsylvania. He didn't have a lot of people around him to remind him of who God was in his life. Journeyed through a lot of deep, dark days up there in the hills. Saw some mountain tops too. But what I saw in the front of his Bible was simply these words, "Jim." His name was James. "Jim, take it to Jesus."

Psalm 46:1 says, "In those times of trouble, Elohim, God is in the midst of them." He's there for you right now. He is in the midst of it. Remember His faithful power and presence in your life. Don't get lost. Yes, you may be hurting. You may be confused. You may be filled with anger and more. God gets all that, and He's still right there, maybe holding you right now. Take it to Him. He'll be faithful.

Roger Marsh: This is Roger Marsh, and you've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Dr. Tim Clinton has been our host today, and his guest was author and speaker Kasey van Norman. Visit our broadcast page at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) to learn more about Kasey, her books, and her impactful ministry. There you'll also find the order a CD button to request a physical copy of this broadcast. Find all of this and more by going to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org), and then tap on the broadcast icon at the top of the page.

Well, that's all the time we have for today. Thanks so much for listening and for your faithful support of this ministry. Be sure to tune in again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Have a blessed day, everyone.

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