



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Crossfire Ministries: Evangelism Through Sports – Part 1

Guest(s): Randy Shepherd and Jamie Johnson

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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: Welcome to another edition of Family Talk, I'm Roger Marsh. You might agree that sports can really bring people together, no matter where they live or what language they speak. I like to think of professional soccer or football, as it's known in other parts of the world, the love of the game unites millions all over the globe. It's no wonder God uses sports to get our attention. Did you know that there is a way for the love of sports to intersect with the Great Commission as well? There certainly is and it's exactly what our guests today here on the program will be talking about. Randy Shepherd and Jamie Johnson are doing this with their life's work. In today's program, we're going to hear how these two friends are uniting both sports and evangelism in their ministry called "Crossfire Ministries." Recently, they spoke with our own Dr. Tim Clinton and shared about their love for basketball, the calling God has placed on their lives, and the ministry they were led to build.

Together, Randy and Jamie co-founded Crossfire Ministries back in 1993. Crossfire is a sports evangelistic ministry that preaches the word of God through ministry programs and by meeting people where they are. Since its founding, the organization has shared the gospel in 68 countries and 47 states. Randy Shepherd and Jamie Johnson both gave their lives to the Lord when they were just nine years of age. Growing up, Randy always wanted to be a professional basketball player, he even received a college scholarship to play ball at University of North Carolina Asheville. Randy eventually fell away from God, though, with his lifestyle choices, but then he suffered an injury during his junior year of college and that became a major turning point in his life. Randy then recommitted his life to Christ and began to wholeheartedly follow Jesus.

Jamie Johnson also played basketball in addition to baseball and running cross country when he was in high school. He first went to Montreat College, which was a junior college at the time, where he was an academic all-American while playing both baseball as well as basketball. Jamie was so successful, he was eventually inducted into the Montreat College Hall of Fame. He then attended Gardner Webb University where he played NCAA Basketball. Now, without

further ado, let's join Dr. Tim Clinton along with his guests, Randy Shepherd and Jamie Johnson for more. Right here on Family Talk.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hey, what a delight to have both of you here on the broadcast. Randy, Jamie. Dr. Dobson, by the way, sends his regards. He so appreciates you and the great work through Crossfire Ministries.

Randy Shepherd: Yeah. I can remember back to Pomona, California probably 30 something years ago, playing pickup ball with Doc in a gym. He walked me right over to the spot where Pistol Pete fell and he had just asked Pete, "Pete, how are you feeling?" Pete said, "I never felt better." We all know the story. He fell, cardiac arrest there, Doc tried to revive him, and wasn't able to, but I was blessed to play basketball there. A few years later, Doc told me the whole story, I got to play some basketball with Doc, and I have a picture in my office which is signed, "Dr. J." Dr. J, thank you for letting us be on your program.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's amazing. Jamie, you got some connection with Dr. Dobson?

Jamie Johnson: I've quoted him many times, Tim. Who better than quote than him after Jesus when it comes to family and relationships? Years ago, he did a special about purity. This was years ago. When we first started Crossfire, I would quote him and some of the programs he put out to families about how to raise your kids and teach them the right things. He's just a real mentor in so many ways by radio and I thank God for Dr. Dobson.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Let's go straight to Crossfire Ministries. You guys co-founded this together, God's had his hand on it. It's unbelievable, what a ministry to today's generations. Take us all the way back. How did the two of you connect? What are the dots here? Everybody's got a little backwater, some story to them. Can you share what God has done in both of your lives and what that connection point was all about?

Randy Shepherd: Yeah, it was great, God's story. We played against each other middle school, high school and college. Jamie was Inca High School, I was at Asheville High School. Then he went to Montreat and then he went to Gardner-Webb, I played at UNC Asheville, and we used to battle out on the court. I joked to youth and adults and say, "Hey, Jamie was walking with the Lord, Tim Tebow type." When we were playing ball, I was away from the Lord. Felt guilty, because he lived the life for the Lord, I didn't. I knew where I needed to be and then God got ahold of me my junior year at UNC Asheville.

We came together for four years with a ministry here in Memphis, Tennessee where we're speaking this week, with a ministry called Spirit Express. Then God led us through the direction of Dr. Adrian Rogers, who called us forward on a Wednesday night at Bellevue and said, "These guys are going back to North Carolina to start a ministry called Crossfire." That's our background there, we've

been together 31 years and we just got called twins in a restaurant a few minutes ago.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Wow. You guys both have a love not only for sports, but evangelism. You want to share the gospel. That's what Crossfire Ministry is all about. It's amazing how people have responded to that gospel message through the years. Tell me a little bit about bringing the two worlds together, why that's so significant, and why it became such a platform for the two of you.

Randy Shepherd: Sure. Back in the day, Dr. Rogers would preach the word and he gave a quote. He said, "Sports and music are the international languages." He also quoted the word that said the Apostle Paul said, "Use all means necessary to win some." We tell folks, "If you're an electrician, do it for the Lord. If you're a plumber, plumb for the Lord. If you're a farmer, sow seed for the Lord." God just called us to be basketball players, so we came together. Had a vision, we preach in churches, youth rallies, revivals, colleges, universities, prisons, rescue missions, summer basketball camps on the street corner, at the restaurant. Wherever God opens the door to present the gospel and many times give an opportunity right there to receive Christ. We're just bookends and God has knitted us together. He sent us out by twos and it's been a great journey.

Jamie Johnson: Sure has. Tim, Randy has been true to the gospel, sharing his faith. Before Crossfire, before Spirit Express, when he was a boy, whether we began this or not, he was sharing his faith as a youngster. I was taught that at home, but Randy and I grew up in the church, Tim. Like your son, Zach, and you, a great bond. I had a great father I buried four years ago, so I saw a lot of the church culture that was affected in discipling, but I got to thinking to myself like Randy, "How can we reach people outside church walls?" Not that we don't love church people, we go to churches, but sports, as you know, is a great way to share Christ. I tell people I take Randy in my back pocket, I pull him out, he spins the ball, the world listens, and man, the gospel goes forth. It's pretty easy for me, my job's easy.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Randy, sports becomes the entry point to get into a lot of opportunities that you otherwise wouldn't get into, really, with the gospel, is what you're saying. By the way, people are still receptive to that. We hear a lot of people being shut out, a lot of Christianity's being suppressed and censored in a lot of ways. What are you guys seeing out there on the front lines?

Randy Shepherd: We've been to Israel 23 times, that's one of the highlights of our ministry. We've built relationships with schools in Bethlehem, Nazareth, even some Messianic schools in Jerusalem. Because we come in with a silly basketball, they'll let us in the doors. I've been behind the Gaza Strip spinning a ball and sharing the gospel, where if I had walked in with a big coffee table Bible with a suit and tie on, they probably wouldn't have let us in.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. When I think about Dr. Dobson, he has such an affection, love for sports, as does our family. It's amazing how, again, it draws everybody in, especially

kids. Let's talk about sports and kids for a moment. It's become a centerpiece, an obsession really, in culture. Everywhere you look, it's all about sports and performance. Let's talk about the gifts of sports just for a second. Now, what do you see? You guys know, it can be really a blessing to kids. Physically, mentally, socially. A lot of lessons can be learned. It can also be challenging, can it?

Randy Shepherd: Definitely can. We were just talking to a friend this morning on the phone whose son is playing on a team. Not that talented, but sometimes the guys that may have more talent may be pushed to the front and sometimes the rules of the school are skirted a little bit, because they can shoot a ball or run a football. When we have our camps, Crossfire, we've been blessed to have a dream of having a camp and then, 32 years later, this is our 33rd summer of camps, we've had about 25,000 kids come through, and we teach them the fundamentals of the game and also the fundamentals of life. "You're going to get cut and what's number one in your life is going to be what you hold onto. 500,000 high school basketball players in America this year, guys, only 4,200 can get a division one scholarship, so the majority aren't going to make it. You got to use the principles that you've learned, hopefully with your coach or with the team. Definitely, Crossfire camp is going to carry you over into life, into the business world, into the occupation that God has for you."

Jamie Johnson: Yeah. Tim, you're talking about discipline, sports, and all that. When you're trained to play ball, high school, college, the next level, you have to put on the hours and it really relates back to our faith as Christians. You have to be disciplined as well to grow on your faith. You got to put time in, so we tell the athlete, "You work hard in basketball, you might make the next level. You work hard on your faith, growth happens." It can be a blessing.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You guys came last year tour, our Ignite Men's Impact Weekend that we host every year in Virginia. We're at Thomas Road Baptist Church, we had a packed house last year. Ben Roethlisberger, Kurt Warner, Carson Wentz, Willie Robertson. Hosted them, all showed up. We do workshops as a part of our event. In other words, everybody comes together for those big plenary sessions, but they also then have a time where they break out and they go to a workshop on marriage, on dealing with addiction. We also open it up and have basketball workshops, football workshops, baseball, and more. We do that, because we're trying to bring fathers and sons together. You guys led the workshop out there. You go in, you spin a basketball. These kids get lost in that. What I mean is they get excited so much about it, and again, it opens up their heart then as a part of pouring in.

That's what I think about now when I think of Crossfire Ministries. You guys are doing this all over the country, around the world, 25,000 plus kids have come through your summer camps. I want you to talk about that ministry. Last year, you guys led 45 kids to Christ at our event alone. It was stunning. Overall, we had 400 men give their life to Christ last year at our Ignite Men's Impact Weekend. That's what this is about. I want moms and dads to hear this

message, because this is critical. We've got to speak truth into the lives of today's generations.

Randy Shepherd: Yes, sir. Tim, you're exactly right. Sometimes, a young man might not be excited about going to church, but he'll come to a ball camp. He might come to an Ignite conference to hear these great athletes speak and we were blessed to be a part of your event where we broke off, did some basketball, construction, beef, ball handling, Pistol Pete drills, Steph Curry drills, and at the end, we would take 15 or 20 minutes, sit them down, give a testimony in the gospel. Even at a Christian event like yours, we don't assume that everybody there knows the Lord, even though it's predominantly Christian folks. As you mentioned, 400 plus gave their life to Christ when the gospel was given collectively and then, individually in our clinics and out in front of our booth, we saw about 45 public professions of faith. Only God knows the heart, but you can't clean the fish, and do you catch it? Then we want to disciple and grow them in the Lord.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Randy, again, a fascinating conversation about influencing today's generations using sports as an evangelistic tool and outreach. Crossfire, again, is one of those organizations blazing a trail. They've been doing it for 30 plus years. Hey, I want you to share with our audience then. Are you doing these camps over the country? Moms and dads are turning this up saying, "I'd love to get my son." Do you guys have camps for girls too, et cetera? Tell us about what's happening.

Randy Shepherd: Yes, we have our home base in Western North Carolina. We'll do half a day camps around West North Carolina full day. An overnight camp, we have kids that have come in from 15 different states, a couple different foreign countries. We have it at Mars Hill University, we rent their facility for five days, a Sunday through a Thursday. All you can eat food, guys dorm, girls dorm, all the basketball instruction you could get at a major university camp, but more importantly, bringing in God's word every day. We're also blessed to go out last two summers with Will Graham and the Billy Graham Association out to South Dakota. Will said, "Will you come with me and help me reach the Native American kids?" That was a great experience, wasn't it Jamie?

Jamie Johnson: It was. Also, to see those natives who love basketball, come out, learn the drills, their discipline. There's a great instruction. It's an effective way to reach these natives, reach people across the country and around the world. Camp's just a lot of fun.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I was looking at some statistics about kids in sports couple of years ago and a piece jumped out at me. I saw that about 70% of kids stopped playing sports by age 13, organized sports. I thought to myself, "That's a tragedy." Here's why. They said they don't want to play anymore, because it's just not fun anymore. The truth is, I don't think I've ever seen anybody go on to a field, onto a court, or what have you, who didn't want to have success. A lot of these kids never have an opportunity to develop skills, don't have anybody to speak into their life. Maybe a single parent mom showing up and bringing them to the field, but if a

coach doesn't take him under the wing and they don't teach them the fundamentals like you guys are talking about, then it's like a lost cause.

It's sad, because deep down inside, they want to have a shot. Everybody dreams of knocking down that three at the buzzer or something. You guys, talk to us about that piece of it, because to me, that's the heart of what's going on here. We're trying to jump into the lives of these kids and give them hope and encouragement. They don't have to become an MJ, Michael Jordan, or they don't have to be a Curry or anybody like that. If they can just have fun and enjoy something that they want to do, guys, that's life, isn't it?

Jamie Johnson: You know, Tim? Randy can echo me on this, but when I was growing up, my parents encouraged me to do what I enjoyed. Music, sports, whatever, going to church, living for Christ.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yes, yes.

Jamie Johnson: What happened was I was able to own my interest without the parent being that helicopter mom or dad pressuring me to do something maybe I didn't have interest in. There are a lot of great parents out there, but we want to make sure we don't force the kids to go in a path that maybe we want them to go in, but it wasn't God's design.

Randy Shepherd: Yes. At Crossfire Camps, we try to let them have fun, but you got to be fundamentally sound. You got to be able to play the game the way it needs to be played. We didn't have a whole lot of outstanding talent, but we worked hard and we were dedicated. We give them the drills in the morning. Afternoon, we play three on three, five on five, we bring a speaker in. At night, we do the same thing and give them a fun atmosphere that, "Hey, Christians can have a good time. You can be a good player." I'm a competitor, I'm sure you are, Tim, and I've had to tone that down over the years by the Holy Spirit. We want to be able to play good and win, and then when you lose, you win good as well. Those are great principles to learn in life.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hey, Randy. We won't say anything about Dr. Dobson at all. He's not-

Jamie Johnson: Yeah, I saw a little bit of that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You know that. Hey, I saw where you guys have this Crossfire ACC. That, by the way, is a basketball division in the NCAA, but an all-star game. What's it all about? How'd it come about?

Randy Shepherd: Well, it's really a miracle of God's story. One night, one day, we're not this super spiritual, but we were going to eat at Wendy's in Asheville, and we don't usually feel like this. We thought, "Feel like we need to go to Fuddruckers." We go to Fuddruckers and there's a guy in the line ahead of me who I said, "Jamie, he coached me at Wake Forest basketball camp when I was nine years old and I

don't even know if he'll remember me." He goes, sits down, I go over when we get our food, and I reintroduce myself to him. I said, "Coach Neil, you don't remember me, but you were my coach at Wake Forest Camp," and he said, "Vaguely." I said, "I played at UNC Asheville," and he said, "I remember that a little bit."

Then I said, "What are you doing in town?" He said, "I'm promoting Shaquille O'Neill's first rookie game at the Asheville Civic Center." He was playing against a friend of ours, Brad Daugherty, who played for the Cleveland Cavaliers. He said, "I'm a promoter." I told him what we were doing now through basketball and former Christian players traveling the world, playing games in prisons, colleges, and exhibition games, and sharing Christ. He said, "I may call you guys one day." Glory to God, he called us six months later. He said, "I want to bring Grand Hill and the ACC All Stars to Asheville to play Crossfire at the Asheville Civic Center. Are you guys interested?" We said, "Yes, sir. We're interested if we can share the gospel at halftime," and he agreed. Grant Hill played the first year, sellout crowd. Tim Duncan played when he was a senior at Wake Forest, Tyler Hansbrough played, college player of the year, JJ Reddick played.

Lots of players that have gone on to play in the league, but we would play them after March Madness. When their seniors were finished with their eligibility, they could then be paid. We didn't have a lot of money to pay them, but we paid them to come and play Crossfire guys, and people say, "Man, you guys must have really gotten beat, Randy." We played 28 games in 26 years before COVID hit, and they probably beat us about 16 times, we beat them 12. We didn't have any household names, it wasn't NCAA Final Four grind, but they play hard. When Christian boys are playing against them and start beating them, they start playing hard. We would preach at halftime and, in all those years, we saw many players and many fans come forward to a big eight-foot cross in the middle of the court.

We had pastors there, youth pastors that would come and counsel, and saw many come to Christ. Mason Plumlee, his senior year, All American in Duke, came forward with about 100 young people and gave his life to Christ. We've been able to stay in touch with Mason, he was recently with the Charlotte Hornets and just got traded to another team two days ago, but he confirmed his decision and said he was really trying to grow in the Lord. God used that game to draw the people out to see a basketball game, and then they would always know we were going to have a ministry at halftime.

Jamie Johnson:

Tim, it's like what you do at Ignite when you had Kurt Warner and Big Ben. Again, people want to come and see those guys. When they think of the ACC players that are on TV, Duke, North Carolina, Wake Forest, NC State, they want their autograph. They're coming there to see them play ball. What we tell folks that support us and pray for us, "They come to get the autograph from the ACC players that are stars and then Jesus signs our heart at halftime."

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's just amazing what happens at events like these. There's a dynamic you can't hardly explain, but I know this with a heart that's committed to the gospel, God moves. That's what's exciting to me. You guys, this is a fun conversation. Yeah. I'd be turning this up just listening, because I love what you guys are doing, I love what God's doing through you. Let's close this way. Hey, on the broadcast tomorrow, there's so much more to talk about how God's taken this international and some of the dynamics that are core to Crossfire Ministries. Hey, they're going to learn tomorrow a little bit about someone like a guy named Michael Jordan who has endorsed what you guys are doing and more so. That'll be a fun conversation. Before we go today, I want to ask our listeners to press in just for a moment. Randy, you're going through a personal journey and I wanted you to share a little bit about what's happening. I want to ask our listeners to pray with you that God would really bring some healing into your life.

Randy Shepherd: Wow. That means a lot, brother Tim. When I was 32 years old, I was diagnosed with a carcinoid. Not carcinoma, carcinoma's very aggressive. Carcinoid, the slowest growing type of tumor you could get. I prayed, I called the elders, I asked God for healing, which we believe God heals. He uses doctors and medication. Some of you listening, they may not have seen the healing, but the ultimate healing is Heaven. I had a foot of my small intestine removed, and then I got back on the road preaching and ministering. Back then, they said, "You got a one in million chance of it coming back." About eight years ago, some little spots came back on my liver, which praise the Lord are slow growing. They were just monitoring them. I'm blessed, Tim, because I can live with this. I take a shot once a month, but it hasn't really affected me.

I still bike about 20 miles a couple of times a week, I still run four or five miles, Jamie and I still shoot the hoop a little bit, but I am facing some upcoming therapy probably. I do a natural protocol as well, so I try to hit it from all the areas. Number one, being the Lord and then seeing medical advice, seeing a natural doctor, and just putting all the pieces together, because it's so complex. When any of us have any illness, we want to hit it from all the areas and, number one, through prayer. I covet any prayers that any folks would like to give me or any advice they want to give me, because a lot of people suffer from different things that no one ever knows about and it's the Lord that sustains us.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hey, I want to pray right now. God, would you minister to Randy? God, do a work in his life. Put your healing hands on him. God, I pray that you would continue to just give the doctors wisdom and guidance. God, do what only you can do. Father, we love you. We thank you for the grace you give to us for your steadfast love. Again, I pray a healing for Randy. I ask all this in the strong name of Jesus, the name above every name. Amen.

Randy Shepherd: Amen.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hey, what an amazing broadcast. Know this, Randy, we will be praying for you. I'll talk with Dr. Dobson. Jamie, we celebrate what God's doing in and through

Crossfire, and the two of you. Keep on keeping on. Our special guests again today, Jamie Johnson, Randy Shepherd, Crossfire Ministries. Reaching today's youth through sports and ministry anchored in the gospel of Jesus Christ. What a fantastic show. We can't wait until tomorrow. Hey, on behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, the entire team here at Family Talk, we tip the hat to you and pray God will continue to give you strength, courage, and boldness for Christ for such a time as this. Thank you for joining us.

Roger Marsh:

What a remarkable story of healing. You are listening to Family Talk and be sure to join us again tomorrow for part two of Dr. Tim Clinton's recent conversation with Randy Shepherd and Jamie Johnson of Crossfire Ministries. To learn more about Crossfire, or to listen to any part of today's broadcast you might have missed, visit drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. If you are feeling inspired to share the gospel, just like Randy and Jamie do, consider giving a life basket to a neighbor in this upcoming Easter season. If you're not familiar with what a life basket is, it's a way simply to bless a neighbor with a wonderful basket of gifts that introduces them to Jesus Christ and invites them to enjoy the loving Christian community at your church this Easter time.

Life baskets are a fun activity that you can do with the entire family. If you have any questions, or if you'd like more information about Life Baskets, just give us a call at 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825, or visit the website lifebaskets.org. That's lifebaskets.org. Be sure to join us again tomorrow for part two of the powerful conversation featuring Dr. Tim Clinton, along with Randy Shepherd and Jamie Johnson of Crossfire Ministries, right here on Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Until then, may God continue to richly bless you and your family.

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.