



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Hearts of the Fathers: Modeling Leadership That Lasts – Part 1

Guest(s): Dr. Charles Crismier

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Dr. James Dobson: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Roger Marsh: Thanks so much for joining us today here on Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Fatherlessness is plaguing our nation right now. Many children of each new generation face the prospect of being brought up in a home that lacks a strong, godly male figure in it. A significant part of this problem is how men are depicted in television, in the movies, and on social media. Ultimately, the family is under attack. And as you may know, our founder and host, Dr. James Dobson has been sounding the alarm for decades that we need to repair our families.

Today's program is a classic from the Family Talk broadcast library, and its message is as important as ever. Dr. Dobson sat down with his longtime friend, Dr. Charles Crismier, to discuss family, fatherhood, fatherlessness, and its impact on society. Dr. Crismier has given his life depleting the cause of what's deteriorating the institution of the family in our country, something Dr. Dobson also holds close to his heart as well.

Here now is Dr. James Dobson to introduce our guest on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello everyone and welcome to Family Talk. I'm your host, Dr. James Stops, and if you have listened to us for any period of time, you know that I am deeply committed to fathers and fathering, mothers too, but fathers play a special role in raising their children and the respect and admiration that they need from their kids and spouses alike. And we're going to talk about that today because it's a vital topic. We're going to talk about it with a new guest to this ministry, but a friend that I've known for many years, more than four decades. This man and I have known each other and loved the fact that we have shared our passions through the years. And so you're going to hear some of that today.

He is president of Save America Ministries, which began back in 1993. He also hosts a daily radio show called Viewpoint, confronting the issues of America's heart and home. He received his undergraduate education from Azusa Pacific University, where my daughter, Danae, went, and a Juris Doctorate, JD, it's

called from Southwestern University. He was a practicing attorney for 20 years before founding Save America. He's authored nine books including the one we're going to talk about today, *Hearts of the Fathers*, and many other works. He is dedicated, as I said, to the cause of Christ. And you're going to hear that today too.

Chuck Crismier is his name and it's a pleasure to have him in the studio with me. Chuck, it's been a long time since you sat under me in a Sunday school class called The Centurion Class. There were about a hundred young married people in that class. You and Kathy were among them.

Dr. Charles Crismier: Well, that's right.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you remember those days?

Dr. Charles Crismier: Oh, do I remember those days, and what a unique privilege it is. I'll call you Jim, because that's how I know you for so many years. 46 years I think it's been.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that what it is?

Dr. Charles Crismier: 46 years. And so we go back, we've traced so many different aspects of our lives. And for me, it's a great privilege to be able to share our hearts together here concerning something that I think is really on the heart of God as well, and that's a matter of fathers.

Dr. James Dobson: I said a minute ago that we share our passions and that one of those, and at the top of the list, is the passion for Jesus Christ and for his family.

Dr. Charles Crismier: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: And I was on fire for those two subjects back when I was teaching that Sunday school class in 1970, I think is when I started.

Dr. Charles Crismier: It's amazing. We go back and we must have had an awful lot of fun, Jim, because time has flown so fast-

Dr. James Dobson: Hasn't it? Hasn't it?

Dr. Charles Crismier: For us all. But we're looking at a time now that these are, as one said, the times that try men's souls. And if there's ever a subject that needs to be dealt with, it's this matter of fathering. Fathers are on the heart and mind of God. He is a father. One of the problems that we have is we've disrespected him as Father. We don't much like his fatherhood. We like Jesus. Interestingly, I don't know if you're aware of this, but a prominent pastor just recently was advertising a book and he said, "I like Jesus, but I don't much like his dad."

Dr. James Dobson: How disrespectful. How irreverent.

Dr. Charles Crismier: It's like an abomination, isn't it?

Dr. James Dobson: It is.

Dr. Charles Crismier: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Were you enjoying your practice as a lawyer?

Dr. Charles Crismier: Oh, yes.

Dr. James Dobson: It wasn't frustration with what you had planned to do. It was seeing a larger perspective.

Dr. Charles Crismier: No question about it, because this happened at the very height of my career. My career was not on the descent, it was on the ascent, and we had everything going for us. We were enjoying all of the blessings of liberty and prosperity that could possibly be afforded to people. And I was involved in ministry up to my eyeballs pastoring and speaking throughout Southern California, in fact, all over California, translating the principles of the kingdom of God from a businessman and lawyer's viewpoint. So it wasn't like we were running from something, it's like we were running to something.

God was using all of those preparations. Nine years as a public school teacher and 20 years in the practice of law, two political campaigns when I ran for the state legislature. By the way, let me remind you that during one of those, you came out of the Sunday school class, put your arm over my shoulder and said, "Chuck, just don't forget your family." Precise words.

Dr. James Dobson: Did I say that to you?

Dr. Charles Crismier: You said it. I've never forgotten it. Words very wise. And I'm so glad I lost those two elections because the man that won had seven kids and he lost them all.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh my. Let's talk about the family, generally. I know that you have written this book on fathers, we're going to talk about that. But you were in my office a few minutes ago and we were talking and really shaking our heads together about what's happened to the family. I was kind of prophetic in that because my concern for that subject goes back to my college days when I was a junior in college and I proclaimed at that time the family is falling apart and we need to do something about it. I was 21 years old at that time and God laid that on my heart. And I, like you, went one direction in a profession. I went into medical school and was a professor of pediatrics and so on, and eventually made the decision to step away from that. I had been there for 17 years.

Dr. Charles Crismier: Wow.

Dr. James Dobson: I did the same thing you do. You and I have a lot in common.

Dr. Charles Crismier: Oh, it's unbelievable. We could take the entire broadcast time to reiterate all the things that we have in common, including our heritage.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, that's right. Your dad was a pastor and my dad was a pastor. My grandparents, your grandparents.

Dr. Charles Crismier: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: The Lord has kind of led us along in the same direction. And I never planned to be in anything that was called a ministry because God didn't call me to be a minister. He led me in this direction and it was very clear where he was going. And a phrase that has been used often is, find out where God's going and get behind it or get out in front of it, if you possibly can. And I tried to do that. You did too.

Dr. Charles Crismier: Well, exactly. And you know have to have your mind or your heart tuned to the voice of the Lord, to the spirit of the Lord, to the word of the Lord. And I think that was at the very heart of it. And you were mentioning the extraordinary problems with regard to the family. If you thought the family was in deep trouble in the 1970s when you first formed Focus on the Family, it is in far deeper trouble today. And the things that you foresaw then have occurred on steroids today. So severe is this problem that a few years ago, the governors of six southern states declared a marital emergency. The pastors didn't do it, the governors did. We're in deep, deep trouble. And the trouble is not out there, it's right in here in this so-called womb of the church.

Dr. James Dobson: One of the most dangerous trends, and I've seen it now for about 30 years, but it is the growth of addiction to pornography, which undermines the sexual basis for marriage and for the family. And when that goes, you are in deep trouble.

Dr. Charles Crismier: In deep, deep trouble. I once had, not too long ago, had a young man in our congregation who has admitted his struggle with pornography. And finally, he came to me and he says, "Chuck, please take my laptop. I can't handle this." It is so tyrannical. And it's not just a visual thing. It changes the body chemistry. It changes the mental and emotional chemistry of the body. It is truly an addiction.

Dr. James Dobson: I recognize it as a threat to me and my family.

Dr. Charles Crismier: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: Because I rarely go into the internet just searching because I don't want anything to do with it. I don't want to be exposed to it. And yet, many people fall into that trap, not even realizing the dangers that are around them.

Dr. Charles Crismier: Well, let's talk about what many means. What many means, the latest statistics that I'm aware of are that 60 to 70% of professing Christian men admit to being

involved in pornography. And 30% of professing Christian pastors admit to being troubled themselves by pornography.

Dr. James Dobson: I've heard much larger figures than that, it depends on the study.

Dr. Charles Crismier: It's not just about whether or not we have nice families and nice marriages. But from the position of God, his viewpoint on the matter, that's why we called our program Viewpoint, because our viewpoint always determines our destiny.

Dr. James Dobson: Of course.

Dr. Charles Crismier: And from God's viewpoint, the scripture says Christ is not going to come back for a church with spot, wrinkle, or any such thing. Guess what the context is in which he said that, Ephesians chapter five, focusing on our marriages. If the enemy of our souls is going to be successful, he is going to begin and has begun in the destruction of the first creation ordinance, which is the family, marriage.

Dr. James Dobson: So in essence, relevant to yourself. You had a practice, you were doing well. You were enjoying what you were doing right in the legal field as an attorney. And you saw something that disturbed you. You saw a trend. You saw families starting to fall apart. That's what led me to walk away from academia, which I loved.

Dr. Charles Crismier: Right.

Dr. James Dobson: But I saw it too, and it was breathtaking to me how rapidly, how fast it was happening and it was nothing then compared to what it is today.

Dr. Charles Crismier: True. When I went back looking at what was taking place during 1992 and 1993, which I now discovered to be a critical fulcrum point for our country, morally and spiritually. Time Magazine, its cover story April 5th, 1993. On the front was a cross. In the bottom right hand corner it said this, "The generation that forgot God." Now, it was not talking about the future generation, it was talking about the generation that had already passed. In other words, from the seventies up through 1992, the generation that had already forgotten God. You open the magazine to its future article called The Church Search, talking about how Americans were flooding back to church after Gulf War I, 1992, 93. And they said the church would never again be the same. And here was their reason, because Americans were looking for a custom made God, one made in their own image.

Dr. James Dobson: You don't usually look to Time Magazine for that kind of spiritual truth.

Dr. Charles Crismier: It was the most unbelievable statement. It was like a prophetic warning to our country. You couldn't even get that kind of message from our pastors, but right there from Time Magazine. Extraordinary. And it told us what was happening. We don't much like Father God.

Dr. James Dobson: What do you think they dislike about him most?

Dr. Charles Crismier: Well, maybe it's not that different than what a famous actress said just within the last year, she went on national television and said, "Down with patriarchy. Down with patriarchy." The whole concept of fatherhood, the whole concept of masculine leadership in the home, and yes, even in the church, is demeaned. It's mocked, it's feminized so that dads have lost any kind of real serious God-given relevance in their own homes. And the churches become...

Dr. James Dobson: They're mocked. I did a chapter in my book, *Bringing up Boys*, that said, "Men are fools. And because of that, boys are learning to be fools too." If you just look at sitcoms and how they display or depict men, they're always adolescent crazies and their wives, the wives are all together. And look at with disdain on these men. Many people are disdainful of what masculinity stands for. And you're describing it.

Dr. Charles Crismier: And now, we're told that fatherlessness has become the number one crisis in our country. Fatherlessness. And yet, God himself despises fatherlessness. And that's why he said that he would be a father to the fatherless. He despises fatherlessness and yet today we have set our course to go off the cliff by demeaning fatherhood, by demeaning fathers, by demeaning Father God. And where do we go from here?

Dr. James Dobson: Chuck, let's turn to the theme of your book. We're probably going to talk about it next time too, but the title of it is *Hearts of the Fathers: Leaving a Legacy that Lasts*. Give us the theme of this book. What is it? It's not enough for you and me to sit here and decry what's happening.

Dr. Charles Crismier: Exactly. Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: What are we going to do about it? And we have tried to offer answers and direction for families. What are you offering in this book?

Dr. Charles Crismier: All right, I believe, Jim, that this book is rather substantially different than almost any other book that's come out concerning fatherhood in our generation and here's why. It goes to how I feel the Lord puts on my heart what to write. This is my ninth book, why it should be written for our time. In Malachi chapter four, we have these words, "That before the great and terrible day of the Lord, he will send forth the spirit of Elijah, the prophet, to call the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers, lest he strike the earth with a curse." I ask the Lord questions. When I read things like that, I ask him rhetorical questions. Okay, Lord, what is it? How are the hearts of the fathers to be turned toward the children? How are the hearts of the children to be turned to the fathers?

Everybody wants to talk about this at the feeling level, relational level, but is that really what this is about? And he said, no. The only way this is going to

happen if the hearts of the fathers are turned back to the Father, the Creator. So this book is unique and different in that, yes, it deals with the cultural aspects. Oh, it has all the statistics. It has all of those things in it. It has the practical ramifications of the breakdown of the family, the breakdown of fatherhood, what happens to children. All the statistics about how our jails and prisons are filled up with people whose fathers were not there. But the theme of the book is, how do we recover? How do fathers recover the love for the Father, Father God? And then follow the model that God gives us to become the fathers that our children can honor and respect in real time in our time.

Dr. James Dobson: Talk to new fathers, those whose kids may be between birth and five. What should be the plan? What should be the blueprint for how a Christian father goes about inculcating spiritual values and character into their kids?

Dr. Charles Crismier: Well, it's certainly not just a matter of going to church, and it's certainly not just a matter of sending your kids to some Sunday school class or youth group or something like that. And I could use this in my own personal life, an example. First, God had to get my attention with regard to my marriage. And that was a very big deal in the early 1970s when we first came into contact, Jim.

Dr. James Dobson: Yes.

Dr. Charles Crismier: And when God began to give me an understanding of what it meant to be a godly husband, he also gave me a vision for being a godly father. And that's when our firstborn was born. Just about the same time that your son, Ryan, came into the picture. He was in our Sunday school class at the age of four, along with our daughter, Nicole.

Dr. James Dobson: More than you know. As a matter of fact, Ryan was adopted because Shirley could only have one child, and that was Danae. She was born first. About four years later, Ryan was born and he came to be our child, we adopted him, he was a tiny baby, on the same day that Dare to Discipline arrived at our home from the printer.

Dr. Charles Crismier: Is that right?

Dr. James Dobson: That was in August. August the 30th, 1970.

Dr. Charles Crismier: Boy, were you going to need that book, right?

Dr. James Dobson: Both of those events turned my life upside down.

Dr. Charles Crismier: I guess so. Well, and it was right about that time that the Lord began to birth in my own mind and heart a vision for both being a godly husband and a godly father. So what did I do? With our oldest daughter, Nicole, we were living in school housing right across from Pasadena Nazarene College where my wife was going to school while I was in law school. What did I do? I took Nicole in my

arms when she was just a little tyke, carried her across in the evening, spoke the word of God into her life, ministered to her. We took a hiking trip into Yosemite. She was carried on our backs. At night, I took her out of the tent, took her up on a mound, wrapped a down jacket around her, and began to share with her the glories of the creator and the creation.

Dr. James Dobson: Did she understand?

Dr. Charles Crismier: Nicole has come, gradually, over time, see these things happen line upon line, precept upon precept and the sharing of the word of God. With all of my daughters, even though I was a very, very busy guy with my law practice and then also ministering and speaking all over California and so on, virtually every single night I would take those girls. I talk about it in my book, *Hearts of the Fathers*, what I did to disciple them and to show them the heart of the Father as revealed through the touch and the words of their own father.

Dr. James Dobson: Chuck, we're going to have to pick this up next time, and I hope you'll be with us again because we are out of time for today.

Dr. Charles Crismier: It'd be a privilege.

Dr. James Dobson: You broadcast on radio five days a week, so you-

Dr. Charles Crismier: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: Know what I'm talking about.

Dr. Charles Crismier: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: And you have to shut up when you're finished or you won't be heard. What you say doesn't matter. So thank you for being our guest.

Dr. Charles Crismier: It's a privilege.

Dr. James Dobson: It's great to renew the friendship, and I appreciate you and what you're trying to do. You've got the same objectives and the same goals that the Lord laid on my heart many years ago.

Dr. Charles Crismier: We're carrying the mantle together.

Dr. James Dobson: Give my regards to Kathie and we'll see you next time.

Dr. Charles Crismier: We'll do it.

Roger Marsh: It is so important for us to share the word of God's with our kids, especially as fathers. Thank you so much for joining us for today's edition of Family Talk.

You've been listening to part one of our program about fatherlessness, so please join us again tomorrow for part two of this conversation.

Now, if you missed any part of today's program or if you'd like to listen to parts one and two together, please visit our website at drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. Dr. Crismier put together a book he refers to in today's conversation. It's called *Hearts of the Fathers*. Now, you can also find out more about Dr. Charles Crismier on our website. Again, go to drjamesdobson.org and just click on the broadcast tab.

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I'm Roger Marsh. Join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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