



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Living the Good Life – Part 2

Guest(s): Chuck Colson

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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: Well, welcome once again to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. Question, where do you find meaning in life? It's a question that we all have to wrestle with, and the late Chuck Colson had a profound answer. The good life isn't found in gratifying ourselves, but in serving others. On today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, Dr. Dobson continues his conversation with his dear friend, Chuck Colson, about that very idea. And these are principles that are drawn from Chuck's landmark book called *The Good Life*. Here now, once again, is our host, Dr. James Dobson, and his guest, Chuck Colson, on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: We have a lot of ground to cover, so I'm going to introduce Chuck Colson very quickly, because most people know who he is anyway. Chuck is a former presidential aide to Richard Nixon and founder of the international ministry, Prison Fellowship. He's the author of 23 books, a very popular speaker. He holds a B.A. degree from Brown University and a law degree from George Washington University and is a constitutional scholar, constitutional lawyer. Chuck has been married to Patty, a great lady, for 41 years. He's the father of three children and has five grandchildren, and it's so good to have him back to discuss his new book. The title of it is *The Good Life: Seeking Purpose and Meaning and Truth in Your Life*.

Chuck, this is an outstanding book.

Chuck Colson: Thank you, Jim.

Dr. James Dobson: I hope it has the same kind of success that you've had with so many other books, *Born Again* and *Loving God* and many of your earlier books, which really dealt with the passion that's within you for Jesus Christ. And would it be appropriate to say that *The Good Life*, maybe I ought to save this question for the end of our conversation instead of the beginning, but would it be appropriate to say that the good life really does link into what Jesus said with regard to bringing life and life more abundantly? That's what He offered. He didn't offer a release from difficulty and pain and death eventually. In fact, He said, "In this world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, for I've

overcome the world.” It is the abundant life that you're defining. You call it the good life. He called it the abundant life.

Chuck Colson: Right, and I'm taking people there, Jim, by way of what they already know themselves. The first half of this book is something that many people have encountered. The second half is what they can see if they look around them. So I'm trying to take him there not by hitting him over the head with a Bible, but saying, look at life and see what you can figure out on how the world works and where you fit in. And what you're going to discover, and that's the ending of the book, is that the biblical worldview is the only one that makes sense. It's the only one that's rational. But it's exactly what Jesus was talking about. The abundance comes not from what we can get for ourselves, but the contribution we can make to other people. That's what gives us our ultimate meaning in life.

Dr. James Dobson: Talk to the nonbeliever at this moment, the one who just was spinning the dial and happened to hear us today.

Chuck Colson: Well, I always ask people what they believe and where they believe their rights come from. And when you start talking to people who are nonbelievers, and I would say to any nonbeliever listening to us, you're a human being, you have life, but who guarantees that? If we live in a moral vacuum, if there is no God, if there is no transcendent standard by which we live, why should you stay alive? There's a fellow by the name of Peter Singer. I write about this in the book. A professor at Princeton who New York Magazine calls the most influential philosopher in America.

Dr. James Dobson: Professor of bioethics.

Chuck Colson: Professor of bioethics at Princeton who believes in infanticide and he believes that if you've got Alzheimer's, you should just be put gently to sleep. He believes that life is only valuable for what it can contribute to society. And his ethical framework is “Do the greatest good for the greatest number. Create the maximum amount of pleasure for the most number of people.” That sounds good if you're on the receiving end of that pleasure or good. It's not very good if you're on the margins of society, old, over 70 years old, need dialysis, or you're born with some mental impediment. I have a 14-year-old autistic grandson being raised by a single mom who's a deeply committed believer who is doing a heroic job, my daughter Emily. And Max is my 14-year-old grandson. I love that kid. But he's got autism, severely disabled. It's costing \$65,000 a year to keep him alive, I'm telling that story in the book, and keep him in school. But life has meaning. But it's only if there is a God who invests it with meaning.

And so I would say to people listening, if you don't believe in God, you're dangling by a thread. You're not secure in that belief on your own life and viability and rights. And this is why Christians through the years have been the greatest defenders of human rights. This is why you and I, Jim, have teamed up on persecution of the Christians in Sudan and slavery and North Korea, why we've teamed up on the AIDS epidemic in Africa. All the projects you and I have

been involved in flow from the fact that we believe there is a God who loves every single human being equally, regardless of the condition that person is in or how tenuous their hold is on life. Everybody has human dignity. That only comes from God. The second thing I would say to people is if you don't think there's a God, please go look at the mountains sometime, the majesty of those mountains. Go look at the intricacy of this earth. Look at the good things you see in life and tell me, is this all some cosmic accident? And then start looking at the question of origins of life without God. It's a pretty bleak picture. We came out of the primordial soup, if that's the case. And if so, we're nothing but grown-up germs after all these billions of years. I mean, there's a lot of ways you engage people. And if you ask people what's important to them in life, the answers you get will always give you an opportunity to talk about why the gospel and the biblical view of reality gives it to you and nothing else does. I spend a lot of time on that in this book because that's what Christians need to understand. How can we defend what we believe?

Dr. James Dobson: Let me role play with you, okay? Put myself in the position of the one that does not know Jesus Christ. Mr. Colson, what you just said really resonates with me. I have been very, very successful in what I'm doing. I've made a lot of money. But there is an emptiness inside and I'd like to know what you're talking about. But I have no idea how to find it. Where do I start?

Chuck Colson: I can prove there's a God. I could go into the Supreme Court and make that argument today. But to know that God requires an act of faith. The only way in which you can know Him personally, you can't know Him personally by finding some philosophical supposition that says God is. You have to know Him by making that leap of faith. Why? Because if you could prove God was who He was, he'd be no different than the tree outside the window. You'd take Him for granted. But only by faith can you love Him, and God wants your love. But He will take you whatever shape you're in, whatever condition you're in. If you go to Him, He will answer that simple prayer. I repent. I've fallen short. I want to know the Jesus who died on the cross for me.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that what happened to you?

Chuck Colson: Sure is. I had everything by the world's standards. I was absolutely on top of the world. And I found myself empty before Watergate.

Dr. James Dobson: Who introduced you to Christ? Who told you what you're saying?

Chuck Colson: Tom Phillips. Tom Phillips was the president of the Raytheon Company, largest employer in New England. One summer night, I had visited in his office, and he was so changed, I asked him what happened to him. And he said, I've accepted Jesus Christ. I was shocked to stay in his office. So I went back and spent a summer's evening with him at his home just outside of Boston. And this was 32 years ago this past summer. And he explained to me what had happened. He'd gone to a Billy Graham crusade in New York and given his life to Christ. He also read to me from C.S. Lewis's book, *Mere Christianity*, the chapter on the great

sin, pride. And that really hit me like a torpedo. That went right through my armor.

I was the self-sufficient Marine captain, tough guy, rose to the top, stomped on people all the way up. That night I felt so unclean and unworthy. Like I suspect a lot of people who come just as you did in the role playing a moment ago, Jim, and say I'm empty inside. I knew that night I was empty inside. And that person who comes that way knows he feels guilt. And why do you feel guilt? Because you know in your heart there's a moral law and you broke it. And there's only one way out.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you obviously had to do a lot of good to make up for the bad things you've done. Surely you had to go do what's called restitution. You had to go pay everybody back. What did you have to do before God could accept you?

Chuck Colson: Before God could accept me, I had to let Him know that I was a sinner desperately in need and needed Him and Him alone. I cannot live a life worthy of Christ's sacrifice. All I can do is come to Him in total gratitude and give Him the one thing I've got, me. So it's not that you have to do good works to get received into the kingdom. You can't. You can't do enough. You couldn't possibly do enough. That's the problem the Jews had before Jesus came. But the answer is that you do it now because you want to do it out of gratitude. Gratitude, Chesterton said, is the mother of all virtues. If Americans got up every morning and thought all the things they had to be grateful for, the Declaration of Independence, freedom, this country of abundance, and most of all, a God who loves us, we would never get up unhappy in the morning.

Dr. James Dobson: Let me continue to role play with you. I have heard that message before. And I have been turned off and unwilling to listen because I just don't see how a good God, a great God who spun the whole universe in place with His Word, which is what we're told, would allow a tragedy like your grandson, Max, who has autism and who struggles. And I look at children like that. There's a lady sitting in our gallery today, she's in a wheelchair. I don't know her circumstances, but, you know, how could God allow something like that to happen? How could He care about me if He allows people to suffer like that?

Chuck Colson: Well, the answer to that is, first of all, I think the lady in the gallery would agree, and I would believe passionately that my grandson is not a tragedy but a blessing. He's changed my daughter's life. He's changed my life. My whole perception of the world is different because of Max. I've learned more from Max than I've learned from college professors. So Max is serving a great purpose in the world, and everybody has a purpose in the midst of our suffering and disabilities. God redeems that. But why does He allow it in the first place? He doesn't. What God has done is to give us a free will. He has said, I'm going to create you in my image. I'm going to let you choose between good and evil, but I'm going to tell you to choose good because it'll be good for you. The first human beings rebelled against that. That's what we call original sin. It bent human nature. It disposed us to do wrong. And ever since then, we have had sin

and suffering in the world, and the whole universe has been under the curse of original sin. Now that seems like a cold, impersonal explanation to somebody who's suffering, but it isn't because you want to stop and think, what was God's alternative? He could have made us as an automaton who would never sin, but then we wouldn't love God. And if we did love God, it wouldn't be an act of free will. So you need free will in order to be in the image of God and to love God. And the only way that's going to happen is if you have the capacity to choose evil, which human beings do. So in order to respect our human dignity, He's had to allow us to suffer. But in the end, He has paid for our suffering by Jesus on the cross who redeems it all and promises us eternal life.

Dr. James Dobson: What a message. Going back to our role playing. You know, I don't believe in truth. What you have said to me is okay for you. I'm sure you believe it. And for you, it's probably right. But there is no absolute truth. There's nothing that's true for all of us. And I don't believe that anything is applicable to everybody. How do I find truth? How can I believe it?

Chuck Colson: Well, one of the things I do, Jim, is because I get that question from teenagers all the time. I've talked about biblical worldview, which is a passion of mine, and a lot of it comes through in this book, with teenagers. And I'll always say to them, do you believe in absolute truth? Any group. These are Christian groups, by the way. And one or two will put their hands up yes. Most of them are afraid to say yes because they think it's intolerant. That's the first mistake. Believing in truth is not intolerant because everybody has truth claims they live by. And tolerance is respecting those truth claims, not saying they shouldn't have them. But the kids will...two or three will put their hand up. And then I'll say, well, now let me ask you a question. Walk up to a street corner. Traffic is whizzing by in both directions. There's an old lady standing there with a shopping bag. You have three choices. You can either ignore her, you can help her across the street, or he can push her into the traffic. Which one is right? And the kids all chuckle. Now, are there any absolute truths? They all put their hand up yes. The law is inscribed on our hearts, and as Paul said, the Gentiles, the law is alternately convicting and defending them. It is written on it. We know it. We know moral truth. Secondly, you can look and see how the world is made. Look at nature and the perfect harmony of nature. Look at the cell structures and the human body and the DNA and the way it functions. It's impossible that this came from evolution. And if it didn't come from evolution, then there's an intelligent designer. And if there's an intelligent designer, which is a case I make in the book, then that intelligent designer is who I know as God. And you can know personally as God as well. Why is it that you have guilt? Why is it that you feel a sense of responsibility for others? I mean, if after all, we have come from Darwin's natural selection. Why would there be acts of altruism? Why in Katrina would Coast Guardsmen go down on that cable, would pick an axe and cut through a roof to rescue somebody? Why wouldn't they just run and save themselves? Altruism defies Darwinism.

Dr. James Dobson: Chuck, we had lunch together a while back, and you were telling about an encounter that you had with an atheist who was, I think, in his 80s at that point.

Chuck Colson:

Yes. This was the summer when I was lecturing in Oxford at the C.S. Lewis Conference. And I spoke in the morning and in the afternoon, Antony Flew was there. Antony Flew was a name that many of our listeners, I suspect, will remember because he was an 81-year-old at this time, a year ago, 81-year-old professor at Oxford who was probably the leading professor of atheism in the world. He wrote most of the textbooks. If you go into college campuses today and look for textbooks on atheism, philosophy of atheism will be written by Antony Flew. He was a student at Oxford when C.S. Lewis was teaching there, and he used to debate Lewis. And he's been a skeptic his entire life. Then he encountered the arguments of the intelligent design movement, particularly Michael Behe and the irreducible complexity of the human cell, which story I tell in this book, and it's just a powerful story. He was so impressed by Behe's work that he announced in the fall of last year that he was no longer an atheist. He couldn't be. He now believed there was a God who created it, created the universe and created life, but that you couldn't know that God.

So this summer at this meeting in Oxford, after I spoke in the morning, I went back and heard him in the afternoon. And when he finished, he invited questions. He said, I can philosophically prove that it's irrational to be an atheist. But he said, I can't prove the God of the Bible or I can't prove Judaism or Islam or Hinduism or any other belief system. So he said, I'm just a deist. I believe a god started the world, but we can't know that god. So when the question period came, a couple of guys next to me, I said, shall I do it? And one of them nudged me and said, go ahead. I went up and used an argument out of *The Good Life*. I said, "Dr. Flew, I congratulate you on your honesty in making that decision that your atheism that you'd spent your whole life defending was not rational, and having then the courage to announce it. You're a man of integrity. The problem is you put yourself in a box. You have proven there is a God, but now you want to prove who that God is. If you could prove who He was, you wouldn't worship Him because you would take Him for granted. So you've got yourself in a bind. Because you've proven there is a God, you've now ruled out the possibility of knowing the God you've proven exists."

I said, "You've got yourself in a real spot." And I talked about other people who had gotten to that same point and how I'd gotten to that point. I said, "By reason you can get so far, but God requires faith. Now, why does He require faith? Because if you could know Him rationally and prove Him philosophically, then you would simply know that as a fact. You would not worship Him. You would not love Him. And the reason He created you is so that you could love Him. And the only way you can love him is by faith." And I left it hanging in the air. He didn't say a word. It was quite an electric moment in the lecture hall at Oxford. And then I walked back to my chair and he kept staring at me all the way back. And I went up and talked to him afterwards. It really affected him. It got to him because it's irrational to go as far as he did and not go further. But he has to go further by faith.

One of the chapters in this book, that's why I so appreciate what you do, one of the chapters in this book is about what happens if we don't respect the dignity of life. And I build it off my experience with Max. We will end up doing exactly what the Germans did in the 30s. And it's very scary today because as the assault takes place against life and dignity of life, people think, well, we're only talking about abortion and we're only talking about extreme cases and Terri Schiavo and that sort of thing. No, we're talking about every single human being. And what the Nazis did is they advanced eugenics. They started teaching in the schools. They started teaching a philosophy identical to Peter Singer's. They then went into medical experiments which were the most ghastly. And you've spoken on this, and thank God you speak out on these issues, Jim. I hope the listeners know what a treasure you are to the kingdom of God at this point with the voice you have in the world. And you've taken tremendous heat for it.

But you're absolutely right, and I document it in this book by the works of Leo Alexander, who wrote in the New England Journal of Medicine in 1948 from the war trials, the horrors of what the Nazis did. They did it all in the name of doing good, all the stem cell stuff. We say we can cure all these diseases. Sounds wonderful. The Nazis did that. They said, the Germans said that. They said if we do these experiments, we can improve life for everybody else. Sure. Cut off somebody's arm and watch the blood drip in order to get an experiment on how to improve clotting of blood while somebody's alive. I mean, this is ghastly. But these are the kinds of things that get done once you surrender the principle that you can do evil to achieve a good end. You can never do it.

Dr. James Dobson:

Do you realize how I was massacred in the press and the media for saying that there was a philosophical link? Between the medical experiments done by the SS in the concentration camps and the intention now of growing little human beings in the womb and then harvesting the body parts for the benefit of mankind, that there's a linkage between those. I never said that the pain and suffering was the same or that the loss by relatives was the same. You know, there is a difference. between that horrible Holocaust and what we're talking about now. But using human beings for medical experimentation is the same in both cases.

Chuck Colson:

That's the one thing they don't want to talk about. The people who want stem cell research in America today do not want to talk about this. And they throw up their hands and say, are you making a moral equation between this and the Holocaust? What a terrible thing to do. That's because that's exactly where they're vulnerable. You're making a moral equation that is absolutely 100% valid as a matter of logic and history. Go back and review. I've done this in the book. Go back and review what the German doctors did and the name in which they did it. Their philosophy was utilitarianism. Peter Singer is a utilitarian. He is embracing exactly the same philosophy. And I would tell anybody who's listening and saying, what's the reason that I should be concerned and why should I care about being a Christian? If you don't believe in God's transcendent authority and His protection of life at every level, you are vulnerable.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, Chuck, thank you for being our guest again. I thank God for what you do, and you're always welcome here. I want to say to our listeners, please get a copy of this book. Get it for yourself and get it for somebody who doesn't know Christ. Everybody should read this book. I mean, it is the philosophical understanding of life and the meaning of it and why you cannot find the good life no matter how much success you have and how many good things happen to you and how you rise to the top of your profession. So what? You know, when it really comes down to it, it doesn't mean anything. It only means something when you connect with the creator of the universe and when He gives you a mission and He gives you a responsibility. I want to tell you; this is what drives me. This is what I care about. Nothing else matters. We're not building an empire here, and we'll be forgotten and so what? But the things we're doing here won't be forgotten because they're divinely inspired, I believe.

Chuck Colson: I love you, Jim Dobson. I can see that passion in your eyes.

Roger Marsh: Well, what a rich conversation between two faithful friends, Dr. James Dobson and Chuck Colson, here on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. And as you may already be aware, Chuck Colson went home to be with the Lord back in 2012. And of course, our own Dr. Dobson joined him in eternity on August 21st of 2025 so what a reunion that was for those two men. I can imagine Dr. Dobson still catching up with people that he hasn't seen in years on the other side of eternity. But we love hearing this conversation between Doctor and Chuck Colson as they discuss what it really means to live the good life. Now, to hear this broadcast again or to share it with a friend, visit jdfi.org, and we'll also have a link up for that book, *The Good Life*.

Well, the work here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute depends on the partnership of listeners just like you. Every program you hear, every resource we produce, and every family we reach is made possible by friends like you. And right now, your support can make twice the impact. This July, we have a special \$250,000 matching grant in place in honor of America's 250th anniversary. And that means that every dollar you give will be matched dollar for dollar, doubling the impact of your gift. There's never been a better time to step forward, so make your gift count double today while this match is still in place. Go to jdfi.org for more information on how you can give a gift online. You can also call a member of our constituent care team. That number is 877-732-6825, and they'll be happy to walk you through the process over the phone. Again, that's 877-732-6825. And of course, you can always send a gift through the U.S. Postal Service. Our ministry mailing address is the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code 80949.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and on behalf of all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to 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.

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