



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Avoiding the Traps of Inauthentic Faith – Part 1

**Guest(s):** Dr. Jed Coppenger

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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.

Gary Bauer: Hello everyone. Welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Gary Bauer, senior vice president of public policy here at JDFI. And I'm pleased to be sitting in the co-host seat today because we have a topic to discuss that is extremely important. It's important for the Christian church in America, but it's also important for all sorts of reasons, public policy, parenting, marriage, and many other things. We've talked here at Family Talk quite a few times, and Dr. Dobson has had as a major theme to remind people that we are blessed to live in a country, the United States, that was really founded on a very exceptional idea. And that idea is right in our founding documents in the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, where we say as a nation that our liberty comes from God, the God of the Bible, not from a president that happens to be the party we like or not from five magical votes on the Supreme Court, that our liberty comes from God.

Now, the challenge from that is that we're living at a time when a growing number of Americans, and quite frankly, a growing number of Christians don't really look to the Bible for guidance about life and about the direction our country should be moving in. And not doing that, we have a real risk here as a nation, not only for the American church to go off the rails, but for America itself to go off the rails. Sadly, if you accept that premise, that means that the number of true Christians in America, and this is really depressing, is even lower than the number of professing Christians in America. So the question we want to talk about today is, how can we tell whether what we're hearing even in our churches is real Christianity? How can we tell whether the people that we've accepted as fellow believers are really professing a real faith?

And maybe more importantly than anything else, are we as individuals professing a real Christianity and not a fake Christianity? So today on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we're going to be looking at all those really important questions with Jed Coppenger, who is with us today as the guest. He is the author of a fascinating new book on the subject called *Fake Christianity: 10 Traps of an Inauthentic Faith*, and importantly, *How to Avoid Them*. Dr. Coppenger, welcome to Family Talk.

Dr. Jed Coppenger: Thanks for having me. I'm excited to be here.

Gary Bauer: Well, Dr. Coppenger for our listeners is the lead pastor of the First Baptist Church of Cumming Georgia. He's previously served as lead pastor of Redemption City Church in Franklin, Tennessee. He's got a really impressive educational background, including a Ph.D. in systematic theology from Southeastern Seminary. He's written a previous book, *21 Days to Child Like Prayer: Changing Your World, One Specific Prayer at a Time*, and this most recent book that we're going to discuss today. Dr. Coppenger, I'd like to start. As you know, Dr. Dobson's ministry has been all about the family, about how we as men and women of faith can be better spouses, better mothers and fathers and so forth. You're married. You and your wife, Melanie, have three children. You've been married for 18 years. Why is it important to be an authentic Christian and not just a Christian in name if we're going to be successful parents and successful husbands and wives?

Dr. Jed Coppenger: Yeah. I think it's absolutely critical for parents to understand that they have a disproportionately massive impact on their children's ability to receive the gospel or to not walk in line with the gospel and its truth. And it doesn't mean that we need to be perfect parents. What it means is that we need to be authentic Christians and authentic Christians are Christians who follow what the Bible teaches, which is that we are Christians who aren't just hearers of the word, but doers only. We're not just people that play games with the truth and honor the Lord with our lips. While at home, we show our hearts are far from Him. In the interactions around our dinner table, in our interactions in the car, when it's bedtime, when you're making decisions about all kinds of different issues, those are opportunities to display the goodness of God and His glory and be signposts that point our kids to the one being who will satisfy their hearts or to turn them away.

And that's why it's so important for Christians to hear a message like the message in this book that Jesus gives us, that final message on the Tuesday of Easter week, where we understand that a lot of the things that will make the biggest differences in our children's ability to walk in the faith or not, aren't the huge moments. It's really a series of small actions over time that God can use to help them to experience more of the abundant life that He wants them to experience.

Gary Bauer: Dr. Dobson and I, more years ago than I care to remember, wrote a book called *Children at Risk: The Battle for the Hearts and Minds of Our Children*. And we live in a time where obviously powerful forces, many of them, I think without exaggeration, forces that could be called evil, are trying to win over our children. And so it's incredibly important that we as Christians not allow that to happen. God's given us these children and we have an obligation, a godly obligation to raise them in the way they should be raised. My understanding is that you gave a sermon based on Matthew 23. That is this sermon that Christ delivered on the Tuesday of Easter week. And there was such a reaction to it that you decided to turn it into a book. So talk about that a little bit and why

Matthew 23 would be a great place to start for anybody to understand why this book is so important.

Dr. Jed Coppenger: It was a year since I'd written my first book and the publisher came to me and they said, "Hey, would you consider writing another book?" And I love praying with specificity. And so I was asking God, "Would you show me if and what you'd want me to do this month?" He didn't have to, but that was my prayer. And it just so happened I was preaching through the book of Matthew and I preached this message like you mentioned and there was an acquisitions editor in the congregation who said after the service, "Hey, you should turn that into a book." And I took that as an answer to that prayer that I was praying. But as I reflected more on that message, and the reason why the acquisitions editor mentioned it is because Jesus shows us an incredible pathway forward and standing against the unrighteousness around us and battling the unrighteousness within us.

J.C. Ryle years ago in the 19th century famously said that two marks of a genuine Christian are new inner peace, but also new inner warfare, that there is a fighting of the good fight from the heart that Christians need to be engaged with, which helps us stand against unrighteousness around us without being self-righteous, that we understand we still have a battle in our hearts and in order for us to experience more of the abundant life that Jesus brought for us with His blood, we need to fight the good fight around us, but also within us. And that both and approach will really help us experience more of the peace and joy and focus and impact that Jesus wants us to experience in our daily lives.

Gary Bauer: Now, I think you found in that one chapter, Matthew, 10 examples given by Christ Himself about the difference between a real faith and a fake faith. Would you like to name some of those? I mean, I think the titles of the chapters alone are almost an outline. I guess they are an outline of how we can approach this subject.

Dr. Jed Coppenger: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I'll zip through them real quickly. Here are the 10 that I saw in there. One, that it fails to practice what it preaches. Fake Christianity is a hearer of the word, not a doer of the word. Secondly, it mandates higher standards for others than it has for itself. So it wants other people to have to live up to a standard that we ourselves aren't really going to be able to live up to in the process. Thirdly, it's motivated by human attention and affirmation. It has a performer's mentality instead of a servant's mentality, which really impacts how you go about the things that you go about. Fourth, it gets people to reject real Christianity. That's not an all or nothing kind of thing. Oftentimes it's a step away from or towards the real thing. Fifth, fake Christianity is marked by misdirected passions, which means yes, it's important to be passionate about certain things, but we have to be careful that our passions for good things don't take us away from the heart of God's Word and His direction for our lives and other people's as well.

Number six, as fake Christianity plays games with the truth. It treats Christianity like a salad bar, the Bible like a salad bar, where we pick and choose the parts we like and ignore the parts we don't. And we've got to be aware of that around us in the culture, but also we got to be aware of that in our own lives as well. Number seven, fake Christianity majors on the minors while forgetting the majors. And so we have to be careful that we understand how to have kind of a biblical triage when it comes to the truth and keep the main things the main things. Number eight, fake Christianity focuses on the outside while neglecting the inside. This is what Jesus was talking about when He talked about those who honored God with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him. And so that's something everybody needs to watch out for.

Number nine, fake Christianity condemns others' mistakes while denying its own. You can think about how easy it is to identify sins and the culture around us, which we should do, but fail to understand the serious nature of the sins that Jerry Bridges calls are respectable sins, sins that we are more okay with that we actually need to deal with as well. Number 10, and that's the last one, is fake Christianity fails to receive God's offer of mercy, that even in the midst of all of the strong words that Jesus has about the audience's sin that He's talking to, in the midst of that, He still says what John Newton says essentially, "Although your sins are many, his mercy is more." That He's got plenty of blood bought mercy to help anybody and everybody walk in a new way, not just get eternal life, not just forgiveness of sins, but we can walk in the newness of His spirit today.

Gary Bauer:

That is a great summary. When I first heard that you were going to be on, I have to admit, I hadn't read Matthew 23 recently. And when I went back and read it, it is a very convicting chapter about how we ought to approach our faith. And of course, your book really fleshes that out and gives people, I think, the kind of outline of how they can approach this issue and end up being better believers and more effective in sharing their faith with others. The chapter entitled "Mandating Higher Standards for Others," you tell the great biblical story, and why don't you remind us about it of how God sent Nathan to correct David. David, as we know, was the apple of God's eye, but David had some rocky roads, bad decisions. And the story that Nathan tells David is an incredible story. And David misses entirely that the story is actually about him.

Dr. Jed Coppenger:

That's exactly right. It is amazing how sin can blind us. The writer of Hebrews talks about the deceitfulness of sin. And he's writing to Christians. He says, "You got to watch out that sin is lying to you, that you're lying to yourself." And David certainly shows us a great example or a sobering example of how easy it is to do this. I mean, David, after all, had seen God do so many incredible things, and yet he still got to the place where he committed adultery with Bathsheba, where he had someone that was serving him murdered essentially with Uriah. And in the midst of all that, still couldn't pick up on how he was the bad guy in the story where Nathan the prophet comes to him and describes a situation that was obvious to any of us reading the story that he's talking about David. David misses it.

And then of course, Nathan says, "You're the man." And he helps David realize by God's grace that he was not living up to the standard that God had for his life and that he was not able to see it. Thankfully, he did. In Psalm 51, we have his repentance and receiving of mercy, but it's important for us to all understand we all can do the same thing, that we can have a higher standard for other people than we do for ourselves. And a lot of times it won't be as dramatic as the Nathan/David story. What it will be, it will be more like where someone else might have a bad moment and we'll never let them forget it in our minds and in our hearts, but we want other people to forgive us and forget about our bad moments, those moments where we weren't at our best, where we said the thing we shouldn't say, where we did the thing we shouldn't have done, or maybe we didn't do the thing we should have done.

We want people to forgive us in that moment. We want people to be patient with us in that moment, but oftentimes we won't be towards those around us. Well, what are we doing in that moment? We're holding them to a higher standard than we ourselves are being held to. We're placing a burden on them, just like the Pharisees and scribes did. When Jesus calls us to love people in a burden relieving way, He says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He wants us to be more like Elizabeth Elliot who went back to the people who martyred her husband with a young child. With a young child, she went back to them so that she might win some of them to the Lord. Well, what is she doing there? She is placing a burden on her back so that she can relieve a burden for others.

I know not all of us are called to the exact same mission that she was, but all of us are called to do things like that. And it may be just, you think about families, it may be just helping siblings see one another in a busy week. You got a lot of homework this week. I'll do the dishes for you since it's your turn. Let me relieve that burden. We can start really small to relieve burdens in our homes and it can really make a big difference in advancing the kingdom.

Gary Bauer:

I know the story that you just referred. I always found that to be almost unbelievable that she could go back to the folks, to the people, to that tribe that had taken her precious husband away because she still loved them so much. She wanted them to know about Jesus. That's a tough standard for any of us to live up to, I think. One of the chapters talks about the temptation in some cases for us to be motivated by the attention of our fellow human beings and to be affirmed by them and acclaimed by them, and that can lead us down really the wrong path. And quite frankly, if we really preach the gospel in a truthful way, in today's world, that's not going to get you a lot of acclaim. It could be the exact opposite. I always get a little suspicious of Christians that are extremely popular in the popular culture, because it makes me wonder whether they're really speaking the truth.

But you have a little bit of experiences. Look, God sentenced me to work in Washington D.C. around politicians and I've run for office myself and so forth. The acclaim of the crowd is a very powerful thing. You have a little experience

yourself in a very early acting career. I thought that was a humorous story. Why don't you share that with us because of the lesson it teaches?

Dr. Jed Coppenger:

Oh yeah. My acting career, it peaked in kindergarten when I was Old McDonald in "Old McDonald Had a Farm" play in El Dorado, Arkansas, Yoakum Elementary. And it was a funny moment. The next year I was like a Christmas present in a box, so it was downhill from there. The reason I bring that up is while it can be fun to do that kind of thing if you're a kid, Jesus says that all of us need to be aware and on guard being able to do that with living the Christian life. He talked about how fake faith can do good things, but to do it for the wrong reason, to want to be seen by others. He says that two times, talking about the scribes and Pharisees. He's talking about their phylacteries and their prayer fringes. He talks about how they were trying to broaden them and do these good things.

He says, but he was doing them for wrong reasons. They wanted to be seen by others. They had a performer's mentality and anybody that's ever performed knows, or if you've run for office, you know, there's a sense in which you need to have an eye on the crowd. There's a good thing there, but that good desire can actually grow to a place where it controls you, where it traps you, where it becomes your God. And Jesus wants us to live free of that and he wants us to live for something more than that. And that's why He calls us away from a performer's mentality and He calls us to live with a servant's mentality, which is something He says mark's true greatness. And a lot of times, this can be seen on a very small level. I remember early on in my ministry, I was getting ready to preach.

One of the first times I was so anxious, just couldn't sleep, and I was struggling. And it wasn't as I kind of looked into my heart. It wasn't because it was a really tricky passage. It was a really easy passage. The reason why I was so anxious is because I was scared they wouldn't think I was a good preacher. And what I had ended up doing without even realizing it is that my heart had slipped from a servant's mentality to a performer's mentality, where I was trying to use a good thing like preaching to get affirmed by others instead of to glorify God. And because of it, I was just trapped in this cycle of anxiety. A lot of times our emotional life will point to the fact that we have been trapped in a performer's mentality, that Jesus says He wants us to turn from and to walk in a new way. And all of us, I think, can fall the tendency at some time to do a good thing to be seen by others. Jesus says, "Sound the alarm, turn from that and walk with a servant's heart."

Gary Bauer:

I mean, I confess that over the years I've been in public life that you can get hooked on giving a speech to a crowd and see as a result of your words that some people, if it's a sad moment, are literally crying or you've brought joy and some people are laughing and applauding. And it can become its own drug where that affirmation becomes what you're looking for in your message instead of just speaking the truth.

Dr. Jed Coppenger: You're exactly right. Yeah. They can be good little signposts. I mean, when you're preaching or you're speaking, you get a sense, "Is the crowd with me? Are they not with me?" Well, that's good. And that's a God-given ability to read and to do those things. Where it gets us in trouble is where that good ability that's given from God turns it to a kind of idol that really is the heart motivation. And a lot of times we need God's help to help us to see that. And so we can pray, "God, would You help me see? And would You help purify my motives?" Jesus is able to see it to their hearts, to see them to their very depths and He says to them, "You're motivated by the wrong things." And so I think just asking that question every once in a while is a good discipline to help us, whether it's parenting or it's just going to our job or it's serving a church or any number of things, ask ourselves, are we doing it for the right reasons?

Are we motivated by the things that Jesus wants us to be motivated by or do we need to make an adjustment there? I found that an unhurried time with an open Bible and some kind of journal thing. If you have that kind of thing, you'd be amazing how often God will reveal to you that you're on the right track or you're off the right track.

Gary Bauer: I mean, it's the owner manual of our faith, right? I don't know how people think they can continue to run their faith the right way if they don't ever consult the owner's manual.

Dr. Jed Coppenger: You got that right.

Roger Marsh: Well, you've been listening to a special edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk featuring a thought provoking conversation between Gary Bauer, our senior vice president of public policy here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute and his guest, Dr. Jed Coppenger. Now, if you'd like to hear today's program again, or if there's a friend you'd like to share this audio with, go to [jdfi.net](http://jdfi.net). And once you're there, you'll also find a link for Dr. Coppenger's book called *Fake Christianity: 10 Traps of An Inauthentic Faith (and How to Avoid Them.)* And be sure to join us again next time for part two of the special conversation. Well, the National Day of Prayer is coming up next week. It's the first Thursday in May, and we hold it as a very special place in the heart of our ministry here at the Dr. James Dobson's Family Institute.

For 25 years, Dr. Dobson's beloved wife, Shirley, served as chairman of the National Day of Prayer Task Force, helping to mobilize tens of thousands of prayer gatherings all across the country every year. And that legacy of calling our nation to its knees before the Lord continues right here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. To help you and your family prepare for this monumental event, we've put together some wonderful resources, including a special booklet and an interview with Shirley Dobson herself. Go to [jdfi.net](http://jdfi.net) for more information and just type in those words, National Day of Prayer. That's [jdfi.net](http://jdfi.net).

Here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we are committed to preserving and promoting the biblical principles that strengthen marriages, protect children, and point people to the gospel of Jesus Christ. But this ministry doesn't move forward without friends like you standing with us. We invite you to partner with us today. Your prayers and your tax-deductible donation of any amount help us continue broadcasting trusted biblical truth to millions of listeners who really are quite hungry for it. You can make a secure donation when you visit our website at [jdfi.net](http://jdfi.net). You can also give a gift over the phone when you call 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Of course, you can also make a donation through the U.S. Postal Service. Our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, 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 part two of Gary Bauer's conversation with Dr. Jed Coppenger, talking about avoiding the traps of inauthentic faith. That's coming up right here on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

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