



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Helping Teens Explore Faith in a World of Wonder

Guest(s): Lee Strobel

Air Date: January 30, 2026

Dr. James Dobson: Hello everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, a radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and thank you for joining us for this program.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and we have a special program lined up for today, once again, joined by our friend, Lee Strobel. Lee Strobel, of course, a household name here on Family Talk, someone with whom Dr. Dobson long admired all throughout the years. And Lee has authored more than 40 books and other curricula, including the best-selling book, *The Case for Christ*, which was also made into a spectacular award-winning movie. Lee started his career as a journalist at the Chicago Tribune for 14 years. And after probing the evidence for Jesus Christ for nearly two full years, Lee came to faith in Christ in 1981, and he currently serves as founding director of the Lee Strobel Center for Evangelism and Applied Apologetics at Colorado Christian University.

Now, having that university mindset, of course, because of this new center, in 2023, Lee wrote the best-selling book, asking the question, "Is God Real?" And that's to answer the most common spiritual question that's posed in internet searches and really help readers consider the evidence for God in the 21st century. Then in late 2025, he released a new version of that book, which will be the topic of our conversation today. The book is called, *Is God Real? for Teens: Exploring Faith in a World of Wonder*. And that's going to be our topic for the next half hour. Lee Strobel, welcome back to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. It's always great to have you on the broadcast, but this topic in particular is going to help a lot of parents and grandparents. So thanks for being with us today.

Lee Strobel: Well, thank you, Roger. So great to be with you. Love what you folks do. You're such a great force for good in our culture, and I applaud you for that.

Roger Marsh: Well, thank you. And we appreciate you being part of our ongoing effort as we carry on the legacy of Dr. James Dobson here into 2026 and beyond. And when we look at the culture that we're in right now, I mean, this is unfortunately a culture that Dr. Dobson told us we might be facing, maybe 30, 40 years ago, writing books like *Children at Risk* and understanding the need for us to understand the culture. I came across an article just the other day about the lack of religiosity, if you will, or spirituality in our country. And in America, it

seems like unfortunately we're leading the league and people who are just basically saying, "I don't have any sort of religious faith anymore." I mean, basically, I believe in myself. I think George Barna has said that during the pandemic, that was the number one increase was people saying, "Yes, I believe in absolute truth, but it's me, not God." So looking at our society though at the same time though, we are seeing the evidence of revival.

I mean, the Asbury awakening a couple of years ago. Heck, even Dr. Dobson who had to admit that when the baptisms were happening at Ohio State, the archrival of his beloved USC, he said, "Well, God, even Ohio State Buckeyes need Jesus."

But that was massive to see the football players and the baptisms. With these stirrings and young people today, are you, Lee Strobel, hopeful about this next generation? Is that the reason for getting this book into their hands right now?

Lee Strobel:

Well, you really put your finger on it because we do have these statistics from researchers that paint a kind of a dire picture. We have, what, twice as many young people today calling themselves atheists in my generation. And you can marshal some evidence that things are looking bad, but there's a lot of evidence that God is stirring something in our culture today. I have a good friend whose ministry is to travel the country and to speak to groups of high school and college students around the country. And he said, "Lee, I've seen more young people come to faith in Jesus Christ in the last three years than in the previous 18 years of ministry combined."

Roger Marsh:

Wow. Wow.

Lee Strobel:

Yeah. I spoke recently at a church and we had, what, 105 people come to faith. Next weekend, spoke another church, 160 people came to faith.

Roger Marsh:

Incredible.

Lee Strobel:

We're seeing this movement of the Holy Spirit that I think is capturing ... And what's interesting too, it's a lot of young men, young guys are coming to faith. That's another trend that's highly unusual. It was usually women, young and girls who would come to faith. Now, the young men are really taking the lead. So there's some really positive things going on and I've read the end of the book. I know what ultimately is going to happen, but I'm an evangelist at heart. I want to drag as many people to heaven with me as I can. I

Roger Marsh:

Love it. I love that. Well, a couple of years ago, you wrote a book that really marked what you were seeing in this paradigm shift. I mean, your first book was *The Case for Christ*. This is the evidence, and I did the research, and you have a law degree from Yale, and you're looking at this saying, "Okay, well, if you can prove it to a scholar like me, then anybody can move from skeptic to believer." But two years ago, you released a book called, *Is God Real?* and is there a

significance in posing that question as opposed to making the statement the case for Christ?

Lee Strobel: Yeah, there is. What I discovered, and this is what brought me to write the book, a little piece of trivia, I found out that 200 times a second around the clock, somebody on planet Earth is typing into a computer search engine. Basically the question, "Is God real?"

Roger Marsh: Really? Wow.

Lee Strobel: So yeah. So it's like when I heard that, I thought, whoa, I've got to do a book called *Is God Real?* to kind of answer that question. And I think by raising it as a question, as opposed to the book, *The Case For Christ*, it's kind of like, okay, I've made the decision and here, read this. This one's a little more open in terms of the title. Is God real? And the answer is yes, He is real. And what's been interesting to me is we've had a series of scientific discoveries over the last 50 to 80 years that make belief in a supernatural creator more credible today than any other time in history.

Roger Marsh: It's amazing when you think about how these books and these projects come about because oftentimes I've talked to so many different ministry leaders over the years and what you hear more often than not is, this is a ministry I didn't want, but God called me to it because of something that happened. Like in your case, *The Case for Christ*, Leslie had been, I think you used the term cult. It turned out to be Willow Creek Church, but I mean, it turned out to be a great group of godly people and it has a happy ending for you too and for your family, but that personal connection though, you're going to find a lot of parents especially and maybe young people too who are wondering what happened. I raised my kid in the church and now they don't even believe that God's real. Talk about your personal connection with this book and this subject. Why is this so personal for you?

Lee Strobel: Yeah, it's personal for me because I got grandchildren and my kids are grown. One of my sons is a Ph.D. in theology and a seminary professor. So they understand why we believe that God is real. But I got grandkids. And I'll tell you a little story. I connected with a guy and he said, "My granddaughter is six years old and she goes to public school and she's in kindergarten." He said, "One day they were at recess on the playground and the other children were making fun of her and taunting her because she believes in God. Oh, you believe in fairy tales. You still believe in make believe. You're just a little baby." I mean, our children and our grandchildren, because we live in an increasingly skeptical culture, are going to be challenged in their faith in a way that other generations have not been. So we have to help them get prepared and understand not just what we believe, but why we believe it, to deepen their faith, but also to equip them to be strong salt and bright light in a very difficult culture.

Roger Marsh: That's so powerful and it's so important because kids are growing up in a, and I've talked to a couple of professors, whether seminary or just academic collegiate professors who said the same thing. One of the challenges on college campuses right now in particular is we in our generation would go to school to learn something, to challenge something on the way you went from grammar school to the logic part to the rhetorical part of what if, why not? And nowadays, but you'd come away discovering something new. Maybe that's what you did your graduate work and possibly even doctoral studies. Today it seems like the goal of academics is to confuse kids to the point where they really don't know what's real. Is that an accurate statement?

Lee Strobel: Well, we see a lot of that happening. We see people who going into college, having grown up in the church, having a pretty strong faith, but they enter into college, they're challenged by a professor. Some professors will make fun of the students who believe in God and try to dismantle their faith. I remember as an atheist when I went to the University of Missouri to study journalism, freshman year, I took a course on the historical Jesus and it was taught by a skeptic and his whole thing was you can't trust what the Bible tells you about Jesus. And he attempted to kind of deconstruct the faith of the students. So yeah, I mean, we have to be heads up about what our children and grandchildren are going to be facing and participate with them in understanding that we have a faith that stands up to scrutiny.

We have a faith that is supported by at least 20 arrows of evidence that point in the direction of Christianity being true. And this book, I try to take the strongest ones from science, from philosophy, from history to try to show that Christianity is not based on wishful thinking, it's not based on legends, not based on mythology, it's based on a solid foundation of historical truth.

Roger Marsh: Lee Strobel is my guest today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. He has just released a new version of a book he wrote a couple years ago called, *Is God Real?* This is geared toward young people. It's called, *Is God Real? for Teens: Exploring Faith in a World of Wonder*. And you know what's interesting, Lee, how when you and I were coming up and a lot of our listeners were coming up too, if somebody had doubts about something like that, the idea was, okay, well, if you're doubting it, you might be a little skeptical, but we can prove that doubt wrong. We can prove it inconclusive. Doubt has almost become a virtue with young people now, right? Yeah. It's, "I'm a doubter. Oh, you're a daughter. I'm a skeptic too." And it's like they want to be stuck there. How do we balance that and navigate that, especially like you talked about your grandkids, my grandkids are a little bit younger, but how do we navigate that conversation because is doubt wrong in the Christian faith or is it being misused, misappropriated, do you think?

Lee Strobel: Doubt technically is not the opposite of faith. The opposite of faith is unbelief. Doubt means you're uncertain. It means you're kind of hanging in the balance. It means you have questions or concerns or whatever. I think sometimes we

overreact when our kids begin to ask questions about the faith. And many parents will testify that their kid went away to college and came back and at Thanksgiving, they said, "I don't really believe in Jesus anymore." And the reaction then, it tends to be visceral. And the best thing we can do if something like that happens or if our kids start asking difficult questions out of a viewpoint of doubt to say, "You know what? It's okay to ask questions." John the Baptist, if anybody should have been absolutely sure of the identity of Jesus being the son of God, it was John the Baptist. He once pointed to Jesus and said, "Behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." He pointed to Jesus and said, "I've seen and I testify this is the son of God." But guess what happens? He gets thrown in prison. Now he starts to doubt. Now he has some questions, but what does he do? Does he wallow in that? Does he let that erode his soul? No. He gets some friends together.

He says, "Go track down Jesus and ask him point blank. Are you the one we've been waiting for? We to wait for somebody else." So they track down Jesus and tell him, "Hey, Jesus, John's freaking out. Are you the one or not? " And what does Jesus do? Does he react with anger toward John? How dare John of all people have the temerity to express a hesitation about my identity? No. He says, quote, "Go back to John and tell him what you have seen and heard. The blind received sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the death here, the dead raised, and the good news is breached to the poor." In other words, go back to John. Tell them about the evidence you've seen with your own eyes that convinces you that I am the one I claim to be. So they go back and they tell John, but here's the deal.

Has this now disqualified John from any role in the kingdom of God because he dared to ask a question? No. It's after this incident that Jesus gets up before a group and he says, among those born of women, there's no one greater than John. John, the guy who dared to express a hesitation. So I say to young people, it's okay to ask questions. It will lead ultimately, if you're open-minded about it, it will lead ultimately to a deeper faith because guess what? The evidence points powerfully and persuasively toward Jesus not only claiming to be the son of God, but backing up that claim by returning from the dead.

Roger Marsh:

Lee Strobel's new book *Is God Real? for Teens* is kind of separated in a couple of different sections. There's some scientific research, historical research, some personal stories as well. And I know a lot of young people would take a look at this and say, "Yeah, but I believe in the Big Bang. We got to see what DNA tells us in millions of years and all that type of stuff." Based on the conversations that you had with the experts and the research and stuff like that, how do they contrast in terms of, are they all secularists who are saying, "Yeah, science is right, the Bible's wrong." Or what did you discover doing your research that we could learn more about God in the Bible from the research they've done?

Lee Strobel:

Well, I think what scientists are discovering is there is no conflict between science and Christianity. In fact, science supports the Christian message. How do

we know? Because for centuries, scientists believe the universe was eternal. It always existed. But now we understand, this is only the last 50 to 80 years. We understand the universe had a beginning at some point in the past. And so whatever begins to exist has a cause behind it. We now know the universe began to exist at some point. Therefore, the universe must have a cause behind it. And then you ask the question, well, what kind of a cause can bring a universe into existence? It must be transcendent because it has to be separate from creation. It must be spirit or immaterial because it existed before the physical world. It must be eternal or timeless because it existed before time came into being at creation.

Must be powerful given the immensity of the creation event, must be smart given the precision of the creation event, must be personal because He had to make the decision to create, must be creative because I mean, look at the beauty of the cosmos, must be loving because he so carefully crafted a habitat where we could flourish in. And the scientific principle of Occam's razor tells us it would be just one creator. So what have we got? Transcendent, spirit, eternal, powerful, smart, personal, creative, loving, unique. That's a description of the God of the Bible.

Roger Marsh: Amen. Amen.

Lee Strobel: And that rules out polytheistic religions that believe there are many gods. It rules out pantheistic religions that would say that everything's God, and it contradicts the Eastern philosophy about the creation being cyclical. So just that one area of science, cosmology, the order of the universe, gives us a lot of data about the identity of the divine creator.

Roger Marsh: You just mentioned the fact, Lee, that so many people are looking at gods, if you will, little g gods and there are so many different religions and people are kind of ... George Barna calls it syncretism where they take a little of this and a little of that. And next thing you know, they've got this golden corral or sizzler type of mentality for their theology. In the book, *Is God Real? for Teens*. You described something that you call the apologetics pyramid. Can you unpack that for us and what that represents?

Lee Strobel: Yes. This comes from a highly regarded philosopher, Dr. Chad Meister, who I've known back since before he was a Christian. Oh, wow. And later he was an atheist, he became a Christian, became a great Christian philosopher. And he created, if you picture a pyramid, it's a way of presenting the evidence and the case for Christianity being true by starting at the broadest question, which is what is truth. We got to start there.

And then moving up the pyramid to look at things like, well, there's only three possible worldviews, atheism, theism that God exists or pantheism, everything's God. Those are the only three possible worldviews. And so we analyze those worldviews and show that theism is the only one that makes sense when you

look at logic and livability. And then you look at the revelation, which ancient book is the most reliable. And we talk about the reliability of the gospels. What about the resurrection and so forth and the gospel? So it's just a way, and you see the picture in the book of this pyramid to kind of walk people through this process of going from the broad question, what is truth? Well, truth is that which matches reality. Amen. So let's start there. And then building up and looking at the various areas of evidence that ultimately lead to the gospel.

Roger Marsh: When you were working with young people, of course, they come up with the most interesting questions. And I'm sure that a lot of younger people in particular, as you were doing research for the new book *Is God Real? for Teens*. They went right to those questions that are kind of universal when you get right down to what people look around and say, okay, you believe in God and the God of the Bible, but if you do, why can't we see him? Why does it seem like he's never here when I need him? Or maybe the more universal question, if God is real, why is there suffering, your God isn't helping anybody. When you look at those challenges as you do in this book, how do we as Christians provide not a pad answer, not just, "Oh gee, you're right. Gosh, I'm stumped." How do we address those issues because kids really want to know and they're looking to us for those answers.

Lee Strobel: And you're right that a lot of younger people, this is a new phenomenon that really has kind of blossomed in recent years that kids, one of the biggest objections kids are raising is why does God seem so hidden? Why doesn't He make himself more obvious? And that's a big question. So I deal with that in the book. I deal with the question of why does God allow suffering? But I try to do it in a way that really spells out the argument and the answer in a complete but understandable way because often we're kind of pushed into a corner. Why do you believe in God with so much suffering in the world? And you say, "Well, am I supposed to give a 25 word answer to this million dollar question I need to talk about?"

Roger Marsh: Well, they can find that on TikTok though, Lee. Someone will give them an answer. It may not be right, but it'll be that's what you're competing against.

Lee Strobel: Yes. And so I've tried to equip teens to understand there are good answers to this. There are good answers to suffering question and to the God being hidden question.

Roger Marsh: I think about what happens when we as parents, especially those who raised our kids in the faith and we've got grandkids now who are being raised by parents who are raised in the faith, are going through this type of stuff. What encouragement do you have for that parent or grandparent who right now says, "I thought I laid the foundation. I sowed the seeds." I mean, we did everything that we knew to do right. And it still seems like the kids are growing up in a culture that's so hostile to it, they're getting swept away by the tide. What encouragement can you give them right now short of saying, "Fine, until you

start going to church, you're not welcome in my house," which that's not a good answer at all. No. No. But how do we do it?

Lee Strobel:

The one thing that we need to continue to do is to pray for our kids and our grandkids. Jesus' prayers for lost people continued right up until His final gasps on the cross that when you read the New Testament story of His crucifixion in the original Greek, one of the things you notice is the imperfect tense of the Greek suggests He didn't just say it once. He kept praying it. He kept repeating it, maybe all through the torture of the crucifixion, Father forgive them, Father, forget them, Father forget them for they know not what they do. So Jesus' prayers for people so spiritually depraved that they were torturing to death the son of God, His prayers continued until His final gasps on the cross. And so as the famous pastor John Stott once said, "In light of that, how can we not pray consistently and fervently and expectantly for people we love who don't know Jesus or who are in trouble with their faith in terms of what they believe and so forth." So let's not neglect praying consistently, fervently, expectantly for our kids and our grandkids. I mean, that's number one. My wife prayed for me when I was an atheist for two years and God answered that prayer in our case. And so number one, let's pray. Number two, let's engage with our kids and our grandkids. One of the things I suggest is take this book, *Is God Real? for Teens* and read a chapter with your teenager. Say, "Okay, let's read this chapter today and let's talk about it tonight and have an opportunity then to discuss it and to see if this is a sticking point, what I call a spiritual sticking point in their life. What do they think of the answers? What do they think of the evidence to really ground it and then maybe do a little further research if necessary." When you have little kids, the thing that I recommend with little kids, and we did this after we both became Christians and our kids were still young, is we tried to tell our kids, "Let's set aside a time every day where if you have any doubts, any questions, anything that's bothering you, this is your time to bring it up." So we did that right before they would go to bed.

So we're tucking them into bed and say, "Hey, now's the time. You have any questions, any doubts, anything bothering you, anything is nagging at you?" And we gave them an opportunity then to talk about those things and kind of get it off their chest before they went to sleep. Now, the thing to keep in mind is usually the first question they ask is not the one that's really bothering them.

They're sending up a trial balloon. They want to see how you react. Well, yeah, you know what's bothering me is why we can't have a puppy. I want to know why we can't have a puppy. That's not what's really bothering them. But if we respond and say, "Oh, honey, that's a great question." And explain the reasons behind your thinking or whatever, now they're more confident to raise the more real question that's really nagging at their soul because you've shown them that you're receptive and you're not going to shout at them or make fun of them for asking a question, but you're really concerned to get to the kind of thing that's really bothering their soul.

Roger Marsh:

Well, Lee Strobel, this has been great counsel and the time's gone by much too quickly. We'll have to have you back to continue the conversation. Lee Strobel, the founding director of the Lee Strobel Center for Evangelism and Applied Apologetics at Colorado Christian University and author of the brand-new book, *Is God Real? for Teens: Exploring Faith in a World of Wonder*. Lee, again, the time is so precious with you. Thank you for being so generous with yours and we look forward to having you back on the program soon here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Well, doubt doesn't disqualify us from having faith. Rather, in many ways, it can actually deepen our faith when we pursue honest answers. On today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we heard a compelling conversation I had with author Lee Strobel about Lee's new book called *Is God Real? for Teens: Exploring Faith in a World of Wonder*. And if you missed any part of today's program or if you'd like to share it with someone navigating questions about faith, visit jdfi.net. And while you're on our website, be sure to take advantage of a free digital resource from the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute that explores one of the most fascinating aspects of marriage, specifically how God intentionally designed men and women differently. The title is "The Undeniable Differences Between Husbands and Wives," and this is a resource that draws from Dr. Dobson's decades of research and counseling experience to help couples understand and appreciate these God-given distinctions. You can download your free copy when you go to jdfi.net and just search for that title, "The Undeniable Differences Between Husbands and Wives."

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Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and from all of us here at Family Talk and the JDFI, 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 can still trust for the family you love.

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