



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Courageous Christianity

Guest(s): Hugh Hewitt

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- Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute, supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.
- Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. You know, Jesus never promised His followers an easy road. In fact, He warned them that choosing to follow Him would bring ridicule, rejection, and even persecution from the world around them. And yet, so many of us who claim the name of Jesus Christ find ourselves staying quiet, hesitating in the moment when we should share our faith, worried about what others might think. Well, our guest today here on Family Talk has a name for that hesitation. He calls it being an embarrassed believer, and he believes it's one of the biggest challenges facing the church in America today. Hugh Hewitt is an attorney, a law professor, and a broadcast journalist who has taught constitutional law at Chapman University Law School since 1995. He is the host of *The Hugh Hewitt Show*, reaching more than 2 million listeners and viewers every week. Hugh served for nearly six years in the Reagan administration, and he's a graduate of the University of Michigan Law School and Harvard College. He's a *New York Times* best-selling author who's been married to his wife, Betsy, for many, many years, and together they have three grown children and several grandchildren. On today's edition of Family Talk, Dr. James Dobson sits down with Hugh Hewitt to talk about his book called *The Embarrassed Believer* and why so many Christians hold back from sharing the one thing that matters most. You'll hear these two men dig into the fears that keep us silent and what it looks like to find our courage. So let's join Dr. James Dobson now to introduce our guest here on Family Talk.
- Dr. James Dobson: Tell us who the embarrassed believer is.
- Hugh Hewitt: Well, the embarrassed believer was me. And I think it is a large, if not overwhelming, percentage of your listeners. The embarrassed believer is anyone who has passed by an opportunity to tell the people in their lives, in their workplaces, in their schools, in their clubs, and associations the saving news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It's anyone who has hesitated for fear of finding themselves on the wrong side of the culture, embarrassed by a rebuke from someone, or in just fumbling through the basic message of the gospel. That's the embarrassed believer.

Dr. James Dobson: If on a particular Sunday morning you walked into a church that would represent the average Christian community, if there is such a thing, probably isn't, would the majority of the people there be courageous or cowardly in their approach to Christianity?

Hugh Hewitt: It pains me to say it; I think it's cowardly. Here's a test. I give this test when I talk to people. I know that most of your listeners believe that Jesus Christ was real, that He was incarnate God, that He was crucified for our sins, atoned for our sins, and was raised from the dead, and sits at the right hand of God. But now, do the people around them believe that they believe it, or do they just simply think it's a social endeavor? And if the answer is that the folks around you have some doubt as to the depth of your commitment to that historical truth then you're an embarrassed believer and like me, I'm not condemning because I very much struggle with this all the time. The culture does not like Christians to discuss their faith or the stakes involved. I think we have to throw off that timidity if we're going to do what we're called upon to do.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, why are they so timid?

Hugh Hewitt: There are a number of different answers to that. One of the reasons I wrote the book is I thought if I could analyze and identify the reasons that we are embarrassed we might be able to overcome them. Why are we afraid? Knowing what your fears are you can face them. First of all, the elite media in this country has great contempt for Christianity. In almost every newspaper, in almost every network, in almost every elite magazine, that I have become familiar with and I'm a journalist so I read all of these, there is an underlying tenor of not just disrespect but actual contempt for people who believe that Christ is God and does save from sins. And that manifests itself in numerous, numerous ways.

Dr. James Dobson: Christians in some ways remind me of an army that's pinned down. There are bullets flying overhead, machine guns just four or five feet above our heads and people are afraid to put their heads up for fear they'll get hit. And there they're crouched close to the ground so as not to be wounded. That's not the position that Christ has asked us to take. He told us to stand up for the things that we believed in, in other words.

Hugh Hewitt: I think you're absolutely right. I think American Christianity is best analogized to a very large fort, a very powerful fort. It's hard to get inside. The people inside the fort are in good shape. We take care of each other, we have our own publishing networks, we have our own means of communication. You're one of the generals inside the fort. And people know where to go to get their solace. But we're not sallying forth, we're not carrying the battle out. And I think what that means is not just that the culture has ended up where it is, but that we are not doing the Great Commission's work. We're not letting people know that the most important issue is the one that involves accepting Christ.

Dr. James Dobson: Hugh, coming back to what we were talking about there, how do you explain the hatred today for those of us who take the Bible and the claims of Christ seriously?

Hugh Hewitt: It's because the Bible makes a claim of absolute truth. Not relative truth, not something that works for you if you want to accept it but absolute truth. Moreover, it carries with it not an implicit but an explicit warning that those who do not conform their lives to this absolute truth. And not just losing money or position or rank or stature, they end up losing eternity. I included a chapter in this book, because I thought it was something that had fallen into disuse in the church, called "A Few Kind Words For Hell." I have to remind people that even within the church it's an uncomfortable subject to talk about, that Christ was explicit in the description of Hell as has been every great theologian.

Dr. James Dobson: That is politically incorrect even in the Christian church, isn't it?

Hugh Hewitt: Yes, it is. And I can't understand how we will discount this great danger to people at the risk of hurting their feelings.

Dr. James Dobson: Hugh, you have listed those words, you call them embarrassing words, starting from easy-to-say words, within the Christian context, all the way to hard-to-say words. It begins with spirituality, that's not very difficult to say. Belief system, religion, faith, the divine, even God. But then it's moving down the continuum. Lord, the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, Christ, Jesus, which you call the J word, my Savior, and Hell. And there are even others that go on down from there. We are afraid to even express the words that Christ said in the gospels.

Hugh Hewitt: Yes. And it's because we do not want to be thought anti-intellectual, don't want to be thought intolerant, we don't want to be thought to be oppressing individuals.

Dr. James Dobson: Have you been accused of being intolerant?

Hugh Hewitt: Many, many times. I'm a Republican, a Presbyterian, a lawyer, and someone who's written this book and so I am three strikes and you're out on the intolerant switchboard. But that doesn't make me intolerant, I'm not. I'm very concerned for people. Roberta Hestenes is one of my guests on the PBS show *Searching for God in America*, used an analogy that's been around the church for a long time but it was powerful. If you go to a surgeon, and the surgeon knows you're desperately ill, you don't want him to fudge on the diagnosis for fear of causing you distress, you want him to give you the hard, cold facts and then to go after the disease. I think the reason we shirk from telling people the hard, cold fact that their soul is in eternal peril is that we don't want that temporary discomfort to come back at us. It's a very unpleasant exchange with an unbeliever but it's one that has to be made.

Dr. James Dobson: It's been around for several decades. You may remember Karl Menninger's book, *Whatever Became of Sin?* Have you heard of that book?

Hugh Hewitt: Yes, I've heard of it I have not read it.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, it's the same concept here where sin is not something churches want to deal with. Now I'm generalizing, and I'll get a lot of mail from pastors and churches who have not made that mistake. But sin makes us uncomfortable, it makes us guilty, and it makes us feel the need for a place to hide, that's what Adam and Eve tried to do. But it is central to the understanding of the gospel. If you don't understand the disease you don't understand the cure.

Hugh Hewitt: That's right. And we are playing with people's souls when we believe it's someone else's job to bring them, not only the bad news of sin but the good news of salvation. The message of this book is not for pastors and for people who I call professionals, whose job and ministry it is to work full time to propagate the gospel, it's for the business owner, it's for the carpool mom, it's for the waitress, it's for anyone who comes into contact with nonbelievers. It's our job, not just the job of the church in a capital C kind way but it is the job of Christians everywhere. And it used to be routine that we would do this.

Dr. James Dobson: Let me take you back to the issue of the assault on Christianity within the culture. And I find that it moves along a continuum, not only with reference to this situation here in this culture today but historically where those in power have attempted to really get rid of those that they didn't like or those who oppose them, including what Hitler did to the Jews. Moves along a continuum. It starts with humor and ridicule. It moves from there to vilification and to demonization. These are wicked people. These are really evil, wicked people that are trying to hurt other folks. So it moves from one to the other. Then we move to the third which is censorship. They have no right to talk because they are wicked. And it goes from there on to the final step which is persecution. I believe we are moving from demonization to censorship on our way to persecution. Now, if we are embarrassed and intimidated now before we run the gamut of this thing all the way to persecution, what are we going to do in that environment where our lives might be in danger?

Hugh Hewitt: The collapse of the fort would occur. You see, the culture will allow you to live in on islands of Christian belief. The archipelago can be, in fact, very large and the culture will not challenge it. To move out and attempt to evangelize is going to invite the very reaction that you've talked about. Historically that is the case. But we don't have a choice. I don't think it's really an option for a Christian to choose the comfort of the congregation, which knows and supports each other's beliefs, over the effort to change people's lives and bring them the good news.

We especially have to go after, as Christ did, the one sheep who is the most distressed sheep. The most powerful sermons are about how God's heart breaks for people who are not in communion for Him. And that passion is what drives His commission to the church is to go after the very people that we're trying to

bring the good news to. But the persecution is going to be real. We need the courage of the Chinese house church. We need the dedication of the Sudanese in the southern part of that country. We need the willingness of the Egyptian Christians, that I discuss in my book, who've been murdered for their faith. That spirit was once American in its belief.

Dr. James Dobson: And we're afraid to share it in the workplace.

Hugh Hewitt: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: Or with our next-door neighbor.

Hugh Hewitt: Don't even have a Bible.

Dr. James Dobson: Or even to live it in front of people. We keep it a secret, we are the embarrassed believer. We were talking about the Scripture again. Let's read it. Mark 8:38 says, "If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels." That's pretty clear, isn't it?

Hugh Hewitt: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: You can't be an embarrassed believer and follow that Scripture.

Hugh Hewitt: Doesn't that resonate as well in the sinful and adulterous generation? And it's self-referential. I mean, it's got to hit people over the head that Christ is talking to us. I wanted to mention another reason for embarrassment, this is something I think is so important. People are afraid of being accused of being hypocrites. Hypocrisy is a sin that none of us want to be accused of because it's about integrity, it's about the failure to be truth-telling. And Christians especially believe that if they speak from the standpoint of what Scripture says, and yet they have sin in their life, that they'll be accused of being hypocrites. That's not hypocrisy it's proof. There is not a Christian I know who's a genuine Christian who doesn't admit to sin in their life. We are all sinners, we fall short of the glory of God.

Dr. James Dobson: You would not need a Savior if you hadn't dealt with sin.

Hugh Hewitt: And they've got to get over that reticence that they will not be thought to be preachy or hypocritical, at least not by people who understand salvation. If they come forward and preach the gospel, and yet grow angry with their spouse, yell at their kids, any of 1000 different sins that Christians always fall into but, nevertheless, do not destroy the efficacy of their message.

Dr. James Dobson: I think non-Christians use that sometimes to say-

Hugh Hewitt: Repeat it.

Dr. James Dobson: "I don't have any responsibility to be different or to find this Christ because you're not perfect and you're the one that's talking. You're a hypocrite." I think the question of suffering also provides sort of a shelter for those who don't want to follow Christ because how could a loving God do this to us? So it's sort of an excuse. Here's another Scripture, Romans 1:16. "I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God, for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jew and then for the Gentile." Philippians 3:8, "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ." You can't really stand up for what you believe if you hold it all close to the vest and if you're afraid to lose can you?

Hugh Hewitt: No.

Dr. James Dobson: You have to be willing to lose.

Hugh Hewitt: The losing is itself a losery. I include at the... as an appendix the book of Ecclesiastes for the simple reason I love the phrase, it is all a chasing after wind. In a blink of an eye no one's going to know that Hugh Hewitt ever lived. It's all gone in a blink of an eye. All that remains is the relationship between individual human beings and Christ. It's the only thing that endures and so it's the only thing to play for.

But I will tell you one thing that I have done that I think is important for everyone to do. I begin to find and seek out non-believers, people I know who are friends with me, and I will push upon them the conversations, and there are lots of ways to bring this up that inevitably turn back to the gospel. That inevitably ask them, "Have they considered? Will they read? Will they perhaps even go on a retreat with me?" I think it's the riskiest thing in the world is to invite a non-believer on a Christian retreat. And that's because you're putting everything out there, you're exposing yourself to ridicule. But you know what? It's never backfired.

I'm not an evangelist, I'm a broadcast journalist and a law professor, but I believe that as I've seen the amazing effects of even a little bit of courage on the part of someone who's not a professional pastor that we're all called to this. I'll give you one example. A private school that I was called upon to talk to with my co-host from my *PBS* show a question came from the audience about extramarital affairs and whether or not condoms ought to be handed out in schools. And I said "Absolutely not. Condoms should not be handed out in schools. That's like trying to teach kids how to drive well when drunk. It's not a good thing to do." And a follow-up question, "Where do you get off saying that, that it's not a good thing to turn off condoms?" I said, "Because premarital sex is sinful and it's wrong." The follow-up question, "How do I know that?" "Because it's Scriptural, it's in Scripture." So I made a claim on Scripture for truth.

Afterwards, the group of Christian kids in that high school came on stage and thanked me. No one had ever made an explicit claim on truth based on

Scripture to them publicly before, and they thought it was astonishing and encouraging that someone would be willing to do that. Well if that little bit of courage to talk to a high school group and to make a claim of public policy based on Scripture has that effect, imagine what the church could accomplish in turning the culture around if it would make resolute stands at every opportunity to say, "I believe what I believe because it's in Scripture. Scripture is true."

Dr. James Dobson: Hugh, this is really the nub of it right here. You can't make a resolute stand on something that's not absolute. And when we lost a belief in this country, I mean, and the Christian Church included, I can't understand this but it's there. The belief in the meaning of absolute truth. When people gave that up then everything becomes relative and everything is up for grabs. That's where we are, isn't it? 60% plus of evangelicals say they do not believe in absolute truth. That is George Barna's research that says that.

Hugh Hewitt: Wow.

Dr. James Dobson: 60%. That just takes my breath away.

Hugh Hewitt: That's the illness, that's the cancer. Because I'm a fool if Scripture is not true. I'm a complete dunce if it's not true. I've built my whole life on a facade. And it makes no sense. Unless Christ is Christ and is God, and His words are those words that we have to live by then I've been living a fool's dream and I'm ashamed of it. But if they are true then I've got to conform my life to them or at least seek forgiveness from Him for those times when I don't. There is no halfway point. That's not original, that's C. S. Lewis.

Dr. James Dobson: It's a good source. We're talking with Hugh Hewitt, the author of *The Embarrassed Believer*. Hugh, the Scripture that comes to mind for me is Matthew 5:14 that says, "You're the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden." As a matter of fact, the cover of your book shows a bushel basket on a dark or a black background and you see this light showing from underneath the basket. They're just little shards of light that are escaping from the bushel basket. I know that's what you were trying to get at. Hugh, one last question as we finish up here. What will you do if you begin to be persecuted, if that is the consequence for being bold with the expression of your faith?

Hugh Hewitt: If I lost my show, if I lost my ability to talk to people I would be sad but it would not be the end of the world. If I lost my job, if someone did that I would be sad but it would not be the end of the world. I have a great belief because Paul had a great belief. I read Acts. In fact, I read Acts this morning, chapter 20. When he's talking he calls the elders of Ephesus together and he says, "Soon wolves will come among you." I'm going to be gone a couple of days and the charlatans are going to arrive so beware. Paul was a lead with your chin kind of fellow. And he certainly ended up setting, I think, the example for all Christians which it may cost, it may not cost.

But I also believe that God protects people who are not ashamed of the gospel. I do. I think that He is very vigilant in taking care of those who will shake off timidity. I ask people this question, "Have you ever regretted sharing your faith with anyone? I mean, really sharing your faith with anyone?" I have never had someone tell me yes, not once. "Have you ever tried to evangelize where you regret that attempt?" And the answer has never been yes. That tells me that God upholds and protects those who attempt to share His good news.

Dr. James Dobson: The only thing you've said that I disagree with today is that you're not an evangelist. I think you are an evangelist, Hugh, and I think you have done an evangelistic work in this book. And I appreciate you writing it and having the courage to put these things in writing. I trust that that the book will be widely read. Think of the influence that we could have if we simply started talking like it and acting like it. And that's really what you were looking for in this book, isn't it?

Hugh Hewitt: It's all I'm asking, it's not a great deal. And it certainly is what you ask every day on this program. And I'm very thankful for the opportunity to talk about it with you. And I certainly hope that you keep broadcasting to the world because it is possible to renew the culture of America, it is the only way. We talked earlier, politics will not do this.

Dr. James Dobson: Spiritual renewal.

Hugh Hewitt: Politics will not save people, but God can and will and we just got to be willing agents about.

Dr. James Dobson: Thank you, Hugh, it's good to have you here.

Hugh Hewitt: Thank you, Dr. Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: I hope to cross paths with you in the future.

Roger Marsh: You know, sometimes the bravest thing a believer can do isn't to argue or try to win a debate. It's simply to open our mouths and say what we actually believe, even when the room goes quiet. You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, featuring a challenging conversation Dr. Dobson had with his guest, Hugh Hewitt. If you'd like to hear today's program again or pass it along to a friend, just go to drjamesdobson.org. And while you're there, you can also learn about how to get a copy of Hugh Hewitt's book. It's called *The Embarrassed Believer: Reviving Christian Witness in an Age of Unbelief*. And if today's conversation about courage and the culture really struck a chord with you, you'll want to subscribe to our own Gary Bauer's bi-monthly podcast called Defending Faith, Family, and Freedom. Gary is our senior vice president of public policy here at the JDFI, and he provides a thoughtful, faith-filled commentary that equips you to engage the culture with confidence. You can subscribe wherever you get your

podcasts, or you can find it right here on our website at drjamesdobson.org. Programs like the one you just heard are only possible because listeners like you believe in the work that we're doing here at the JDFI. The mission of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute is a bold one, to preserve and promote the family and the biblical principles that hold it together, to introduce as many people as possible to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and to stand for the sanctity of human life, religious freedom, and righteousness in the culture. We invite you to partner with us today. Your gift of any amount helps keep these broadcasts coming to families all across America. Now you can mail your tax-deductible donation to the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code 80949. Once again, our ministry mailing address is the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, or if it's easier, just use those initials, JDFI for short, P.O. Box 39000. Or if you'd like to make a donation securely through our website, go to drjamesdobson.org or jdfi.org. They are one and the same.

And finally, if you're walking through a difficult season in your marriage right now, I want to point you to a free resource called "Love Must Be Tough." This is a five-day email series based on Dr. Dobson's book with that same title. It offers practical scripture-rooted guidance for those moments when only one spouse seems willing to fight for the relationship. To sign up for your free email series called "Love Must Be Tough," just go to drjamesdobson.org and search for that title, "Love Must Be Tough." Again, drjamesdobson.org, or if it's easier, just type in jdfi.org.

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 spending a part of your day with us today. Be sure to tune in again next time right here for another 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.

Here's today's Dr. Dobson Minute with Dr. James Dobson.

When we set our children in front of the television, we're giving over control of them to complete strangers. And more and more, that's a risky thing to do. An increasing number of studies have found that violence on television frequently leads to later aggressive behavior by children and teenagers. One of the most conclusive studies was conducted by Dr. Leonard D. Aaron. He examined a group of children at age 8, and then again at 19, and finally at 30. The more frequently the participants watched violent television at age eight, the more serious were the crimes that they were convicted of by age 30, and the more aggressive was their behavior when drinking. It's time for parents to control the amount and the content of television their children are watching. The consequences of not doing so can be monumental.

Roger Marsh:

For more information, visit drdobsonminute.org.