



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** TruPlay's Battle for Christian Values Online – Part 1

**Guest(s):** Brent Dusing

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

Gary Bauer: Welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Gary Bauer, senior vice president of public policy and culture here at JDFI. Glad that you tuned in with us today. For parents out there that are listening, and we know there are a lot of you, you know how important it is that online games, entertainment, and so forth that your kids engage with are safe and wholesome, and of course, age appropriate. The Bible speaks about how important it is to shield our eyes from things we shouldn't be watching. Luke 11:34 and 35 says, "Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are healthy, your whole body also is full of light. But when you are unhealthy, your body also is full of darkness. See to it then, that the light within you is not darkness." Sadly, in our secular culture today, there is an agenda to, quite frankly, seduce our children by any means and all mediums necessary and possible. And that also unfortunately includes online games and entertainment. Parents are often shocked what their children are watching. Well, our guests on the program today had you parents and grandparents, had you in mine and had our children in mind when he came up with alternatives that you can trust your children to watch. His name is Brent Dusing, and he is the CEO and founder of TruPlay, an online platform with a mission to bring fun and biblically authentic entertainment to audiences around the world, and certainly here in the United States. Now, Brent, as you will hear, is an entrepreneur.

That's fantastic. Making money is a good thing, not a bad thing, and creating jobs. Those are things that we want to do in a country like the United States. But Brent's making money by doing the right thing. And that's not always the case, unfortunately. His Christian game creation on a site called Lightside Games, that became a Christian gaming studio, reaching more than seven million game players worldwide. And it resulted in, and I really don't know the details of this, but we'll talk about that a little bit. It resulted in 25,000 decisions for Christ that came through partnering with the Billy Graham Association. I'm sure that's a wonderful story. There's a lot to talk about. There's an old saying in Washington that no good deed goes unpunished. And the same thing applies really in all walks of life. So when our guest, Brent, got into this business, instead of being welcome with acclaim, he's run into, you will not be shocked to hear, he's run into a problem from some of the big sites out there, the platforms that show

kids and adults all kinds of demented and disgusting things, but all of a sudden they wanted to start censoring Brent's games or his ads for those games.

And in other cases, they literally have tried to block the ads altogether. And this is one of the reasons there are many that we wanted to have Brent on the show because as you know, audience, we want Christians to be involved in American life. There's no problem facing America, whether it's race relations or corruption, you name it. It's not going to be solved without the active involvement of Christians. And that goes for business too and economics and corporations and entertainment. And so Brent is trying to do that. He's trying to make the choices out there for families like yours better and more acceptable. And we're going to spend some time with him about that. Brent, welcome to the show. It's been a pleasure in recent weeks to get to know you. And you and I talked briefly about Dr. Dobson passing last year. And I can tell you, Brent, I don't know if you ever met him. I think you alluded to that. Maybe you did.

Brent Dusing: Yeah, I met him once. Yeah.

Gary Bauer: Yeah. But if he were alive today, he would love this interview because this was very important to him. Our children are educated in a lot of different ways, and most of those are not ways that are strongly influenced by Christian values. And one of the areas is the areas you're working in, but you've done something really positive. But let's start with this, because I think people will be interested in hearing how you came to your faith.

Brent Dusing: Well, it's good to be with you, Gary, and great to be involved with everything that Dr. Dobson did and stood for. His work was, of course, very influential to me. My story with how I came to faith, I grew up going to church and always believed in the idea of a God. And I think that's very obvious if you've ever seen a sunset or a waterfall or fallen in love or thought about the complexity of the world. But I hadn't really read the Bible, that I really believe that Jesus was the son of God. There were a lot of unanswered questions in my head and I certainly wasn't a Christ follower. When I was about 24, I was living in Silicon Valley. It was around 2002, and I opened up the Yellow Pages, if anybody listening remembers that. Sure, quite a few of the members of the audience remember Yellow Pages, actually.

And there was an ad for a little Bible church in ... And this may shock you, but in Silicon Valley, California, there are about two churches. No, I'm kidding. There's a small number of churches, and one of them was clearly an evangelical Bible church. And I grew up around evangelicals. I grew up going to a Methodist church for the record, but I grew up around evangelicals. I didn't particularly like them because I thought that they were way too serious. I thought that if you stepped out of line a little bit, I felt like they were a bit too harsh, but I did respect their consistency. If you would ask them, "Why do you think this, or why do you do this?" They'd say, "Well, it's in the Bible." I'd gone to college at a very, very liberal institution with people who were of different faiths, but then

when you asked them about their faith, they didn't do anything that was consistent with the tenets of their belief system.

I had a friend who, for example, was a Hindu and refused to eat meat, but wore leather shoes. And I'd ask them, "Well, so wait, so why are you wearing leather shoes?" "Why I like them. They're nice." I mean, that's fine. You welcome to wear leather shoes, but then don't tell me that your belief system is an ultimate source of truth, right? That makes no sense. People of another religion, they would say, "Well, I observed this and I observed this, I observed that." But then you ask them, "Do you believe in God?" No, I'm an atheist. Well, then why are you following all these rules? If you're, for example, a 14 year old child and your parents leave the house for a month and leave you in charge, are you really going to make your bed every day? I mean, what's the point? So these people's, their own professed religious beliefs made no sense because there wasn't any consistency to it. So I thought, "Well, at least these evangelicals, I respect them." And I'd known who Dobson was and people like that, and I'd known who Pat Robertson was and the Grahams. And so I'd had a sense of who these people were and what they stood for. And I thought, well, at least let me go find out if this is really true. And so it's a little church of 100, couple hundred people, and the pastor's a brilliant man and was very patient with me and just answered my questions. I didn't ask this in the middle of service, by the way, for the record, but just question afterwards, came up to him, spent some time with them, things like, okay, is Jesus really the son of God? Where in the Bible does it say that? Show me where it says that. Okay. Who actually goes to Heaven and who goes to Hell? What about these other religions like Hindu gods or Buddhism? Are those actual real entities or are those just completely made up or is it something else? So a lot of these questions that no one had ever addressed with me, because in college I had essentially minored in philosophy. I'd read a lot of that, read a lot of writings by a lot of people, but I'd never had the Christian worldview explained to me in an elective class.

Gary Bauer: Was this at Harvard or?

Brent Dusing: Yeah, at Harvard, yeah. And so I wound up, he gave me *Case for Christ* by Lee Strobel, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. He recommended an NIV study Bible that I actually still have to this day and use all the time. So I had never seen the intellectual underpinnings of our faith. So when I saw Psalm 22 where David predicts the crucifixion of Christ a thousand years before it happens. In Isaiah 53, which I think is about 700 years before the birth of Christ and Daniel seven and eight, talking about the projections of the timing of Christ, if you look at that and you take all your opinions out of it, you take whatever you hope is true and you just act like you're sitting in a jury box and your standard is preponderance of evidence. You can come to no conclusion except that there really is this God who supersedes time, right?

There's some powerful entity, this is of course me, you're at 24. There's some God that's so powerful that He actually knows what's going to go on in the future. No matter what choices we make, these are the events that are going to

happen. And that profound realization really convinced me. And then the second thing that really got to me, which was around this time, 2002, 2003, 2004, while I'm on this journey, is the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*.

Gary Baur: Wow.

Brent Dusing: Because when you grow up in Christendom, I mean, I grew up in Springfield, Missouri, so the heart of the Bible belt, really the center of the country actually, you see everybody goes to church and there's crosses everywhere, but a cross means symbolically to me, and I think to a lot of people, unfortunately, this is a church. And I mean, that's fine. There is a sense in which that's what the cross means, but the cross actually means Jesus died and laid his life down so that you could have eternal life. And that never registered with me in a real deep way. And then also the actual sacrifice I made because it kind of gets whitewashed in a lot of churches. When you see the movie, *The Passion*, you see how brutal it was, and then you realize that actually the villain in the movie, besides obviously the Pharisees and the Romans and the devil, but there's essentially which the viewer is the villain, right? There's essentially which, no, no, this is my fault.

Gary Bauer: Yes.

Brent Dusing: I'm the guilty party here. And then you realize that the message of God is even if everyone else was perfect and just you messed up, I would come and do this whole thing for you, that's deeply profound. So that really moved me. And I'll say with the passion, it inspired me to do what I do today because he made a really high quality entertainment product that told a biblical story, but that was executed at an incredibly high level. And it changed my life. It changed a lot of people's lives and that it really inspired me to do what I do today.

Gary Bauer: Well, that's a great story. I mean, if there wasn't a little church in Silicon Valley, you should open one because that's a great presentation of the gospel. We could go and do another whole show. I don't want to go too far afield, but this old lie has been circulating around recently that the Jews killed Christ. And man, theologically, that is so off base, Christ had to die on the cross to wash away the sins of every human that lived before Him, every human living during His walk on earth, and every living human since then, if the Jews had not been involved in all of this, and of course, legally it was the Romans who did it. If the Jews had not been in the area and had these interactions, he would not have been a fulfillment of the prophetic literature of the Old Testament.

But again, that's not what we're here about today. So the idea that a whole people group today is somehow responsible. Anyway, you could see it's something I have a lot of passion about. So that's a great story. And did you find ... I mean, you obviously are very bright and you're business oriented. So did you right away want the entrepreneurial work you were doing in business to in some way reflect your Christian faith and Christian values?

Brent Dusing: Not immediately. Look, I was, I mean, 24 when I started going to that church in 25, 26 when I came to faith. And look, all of us, if you're listening and you're a believer, it's a maturation process. A pastor who I really respect who mentored me said, "It's like peeling off layers of an onion." And just when you think you've got the whole thing figured out, there's more ways than God is perfecting you and refining you. And I don't think you ever really get there until you get to Heaven, but because none of us are perfect. So no, what happened was I was working at a venture capital firm and left my job and started my first company. A company, you might not have heard of the name, it's called Cell Fire, but you might have used the product if you shopped at a grocery store, Kroger, Safeway, or their affiliates, few other chains, and they say, "use coupons on your cell phone to save money at the grocery store." That's us. We built that product, invented that, sold the company later on. The company I did after that was Lightside Games. So I had to go through my own kind of spiritual journey and progression. So that's what we built Lightside where we were making games on Facebook. If you guys remember, if you're listening, there used to be games on the Facebook platform on desktop, games like Farmville or Cityville. We built games like that that told biblical stories, "The Journey of Moses," "The journey of Jesus." We had over seven million people play those games. And that was kind of the precursor. This was 14, 15 years ago, but that was the precursor to what we're doing now, which is TruPlay where we have a bunch of really high quality games on mobile products, on mobile devices, whether it's iPads or phones or Android, Apple. And TruPlay is more of a subscription service. One thing you open up, there's a bunch of content inside versus at Lightside we were doing one game at a time on the Facebook platform.

Gary Bauer: Do you recommend an age range or are they all suitable for children or how would a parent that would want to check this out ahead of time? How would they navigate that?

Brent Dusing: Yeah. So we find kids, really sometimes as young as three and as old as 12, 13 enjoy the games. We went to a Promise Keepers event not too long ago and had a kid who was 15 sit there and play one of our games for about an hour and his dad had to pull them away to get back into the session. We've also had adults, we have a lot of moms come in and dads too and say, "Look, these are games I enjoy playing with my kids." And so there's a lot, there's a sense in which there's a lot of things that people can do together as families. You think about the way Disney used to be. I don't mean today and that we could spend the whole time talking about the problems with Disney, but think about if you ever watched *The Lion King* with your kids.

I love the original movie. I love that movie. It's my favorite animated movie, right? What's the message? The message is a boy becomes a man. Why does masculinity matter? Why does responsibility matter? And that you do have a purpose in life to use your strength to do good things. And those are messages that aren't taught anymore, but they used to be. And that was a movie that I could sit with my kids that I would enjoy as much as they would, right? And that was the genius of what Walt Disney did, even going back to when he made

Snow White. So we believe we make products that, because we have parents and moms come in and tell us, "Yeah, I enjoy playing these games with my kids too." That's how we write stories and that's the way we design games.

Gary Bauer: So we talked about this briefly some time ago. You're a follower of Jesus Christ and these games are totally appropriate for families who want their children to be involved in things that reflect our Christian values, but there's a lot of creativity that goes to the games. I'm assuming you're not sitting down and putting all that together, you're depending on employees and so forth. Do you check or are Christians the ones that do the work or-

Brent Dusing: Yeah, of course. I mean, first of all, yes, I have a fantastic team and just a great team of people. My head of engineering, literally, if you've used Amazon and it says split this order into multiple packages so this part can get here faster. He designed that algorithm at Amazon. Great creative team and great operational team, just a bunch of great committed people. So my involvement is, okay, what games are we building? What story are we telling? I do oversee the creative side of the story. I approve the artwork and those things. But look, one of our commitments to parents is if you use true play, it's going to be a safe place for your kid, your kids are going to enjoy it, and every piece of content they use, it doesn't matter what the video game is, there's digital comics, there's videos, every piece of content contains biblical truth. That's our commitment to you.

So we're not here to be safe and to be family-friendly, right? Yes, we're family friendly, but only because of the principles we have, because Disney and Nickelodeon will tell you, we're family-friendly, right? They're really not, but they'll sell you that. So in other words, I'm not here to sell you bubblegum. Bubblegum is family friendly. I'm here to make sure your kid doesn't eat poison when they think they're eating bubblegum, but I'm also here to make sure your kid's getting red meat and fruits and vegetables, right? So they get all the nutrition they need from a spiritual and frankly from a mental health standpoint, and we can go into this. There's so much negativity that kids are taking on now, and I can give you the stats. Because of toxic content, our commitment to parents is they're going to walk away from a spiritual standpoint, from a psychological standpoint, in a better place after having used TruPlay.

Gary Bauer: I assume you get feedback from families that are happy with the product, I would assume, but this is a world I'm not that familiar with. I assume there's publications online and otherwise that rank games when they come out. Do you get a fair shake?

Brent Dusing: Yeah. We don't really go into rankings and here's why. You made an interesting comment in your introduction. You said, "Hey, there's no good deed goes unpunished." And you talked about acclaim. So let me actually address that for a second. So here's what I would say. We have had an incredible amount on the positive side of wonderful people support us. The Billy Graham Association endorsed us, Promise Keepers, Riley Gaines, Kim Walker-Smith, Dean Cain,

Kevin Sorbo, Eric Metaxas, yourself. I mean, there's a lot of great people who've said a lot of wonderful things about us and taken the time to cover us. *Fox News* has covered us a few times now. So we have actually had quite a bit of acclaim, but it's from people who either follow Christ or at least the things of God are winsome to that. Where we have encountered negativity are by the people you'd expect, Google, TikTok, and it's pretty clear.

Whoever you serve is a pretty good reflection of the types of things that you'll support or endure. So Google and TikTok both block us from advertising. We can get into those details, but to answer your original question, no, we don't get into game rankings because most of the guys who do game rankings are very anti-Christian. There's a lot of games out there, Gary, that are very demonic, very sexual, hyper violent, and those games make a lot of money and a lot of people play them. So they've got their big fan bases. They've also got this kind of set of influencers and endorsers who support those games. So they're not going to do us any favors when we're coming out. Even though we make great amazing games, and if you look at our numbers, which is the data doesn't lie, people can have their own opinions.

Numerically, if you give a child TruPlay or you give them Minecraft or you give them Roblox, they're twice as likely to come back after a week or three times as likely to come back after a month. People really love our product when they use it, but it's based on the values of the things that they're going to be compelled by. Do you serve the light or do you serve the darkness?

Gary Bauer: Yeah. I've actually gotten to the point where if I see a looking for a good movie for Carol and I to watch, if it gets a lot of good ratings on the system, I just generally assume that's not a movie we're going to want to watch.

Brent Dusing: Right. And conversely, there's been some really good Christian movies and films, and I'll have to try to think of example. A great one was about a demon possessed man who's on death row and he tries to talk. Do you remember that?

Gary Bauer: Yes. Oh my gosh, that was a fantastic.

Brent Dusing: It's not called insidious, but it's something like that, some kind of name like that.

Gary Bauer: Right.

Brent Dusing: And the reviews by critics were horrible, but by the actual people who paid it and bought a ticket to see the movie, they thought it was great. And I will tell you, I wholeheartedly endorse that movie. I thought it was one of the most intellectual, thoughtful, bold Christian films I've ever seen, one of the most creative ... A lot of Christian films, some follow a formula. They broke the formula. It was fantastic. But yeah, the people who are serving the darkness anyway, of course they didn't like it because it exposed a lot of truth that they don't want to have exposure that make them uncomfortable.

Gary Bauer: This conflict that you find yourself in, which is totally predictable. I mean, if this had not happened to you, I would wonder if there's been some miraculous healing of the nation or something.

Brent Dusing: We're writing on that, Gary. I'm waiting on that every day.

Gary Bauer: Brent, we've just touched the surface here, finding out about the development of your faith and your background and so forth, but I really want to get into this incredible battle that you're in, the people that are pushing back against you because all you want to do is provide entertainment for Christian families and others that care about reliable standards of right and wrong and all the good things in life. So I know how busy you are. Could we impose on you to come back again tomorrow for another show?

Brent Dusing: I'd be happy to, Gary. Love to be with you.

Roger Marsh: In a world where so many screens are competing for our kids' attention, it's encouraging to see someone building entertainment that actually points families toward biblical truth. You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, featuring a conversation with our own Gary Bauer, senior vice president of public policy here at the Dobson Policy and Culture Center, and Gary's guest, Brent Dusing, founder and CEO of TruPlay. Now, if you missed any portion of today's broadcast or if you'd like to share it with your spouse or a friend, go to [jdfi.net](http://jdfi.net). That's [jdfi.net](http://jdfi.net). And speaking of the next generation, I want to share something parents and grandparents will be excited to hear. The Dr. James Dobson Family Institute is partnering with the Herzog Foundation to launch a national essay contest for middle school and high school students. America turns 250 years old on July 4th of this year.

And to celebrate our 250th anniversary as a nation, we're asking young people all across the country one very powerful question, and that is, how has Christian faith shaped the founding of America, and how is God calling you to help shape what comes next? Okay, that's two questions. Cash prize is up to \$2,500 are up for grabs for the winner in both the high school as well as middle school categories, but the deadline to submit your essay is April the 30th. For registration information, go to [jdfi.net](http://jdfi.net). You'll find all the details there, or if you'd like to go directly to the essay contest website, that's [drjamesdobson.org/USA250](http://drjamesdobson.org/USA250). That's [drjamesdobson.org/USA250](http://drjamesdobson.org/USA250).

Well, as you heard today, there are powerful forces working to shut out the Christian worldview, especially when it comes to our children. And that's why the work at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute is so vital right now. Every day, we are standing up for the family by promoting biblical truth, defending the sanctity of human life, and fighting for religious freedom in a culture that desperately needs it. Now, we need you standing with us and your donation of any amount helps us stay in this fight and reach millions of families with the truth of the gospel. You can give today at [jdfi.net](http://jdfi.net). You can also call a member of our constituent care team. That number is 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825.

I'm Roger Marsh and from all of us here at 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 important conversation with Brent Dusing, the CEO of TruPlay. It'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.

At the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we believe strong families build strong communities. That's why we're committed to providing you with resources that strengthen your home. Thank you for partnering with us to support and encourage families all across America.