



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Everyday Heroes Who Are Making a Difference at College of the Ozarks and Beyond – Part 2

Guest(s): Dr. Brad and Laura Johnson

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Dr. James Dobson: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson, and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome once again to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Ask parents all across the country what worries them most, and many of them will tell you the same thing. They saved and sacrificed to send their kids to college, only to watch those young people come home, despising the very faith and values upon which they were raised. Well, on today's edition of Family Talk, we are continuing a conversation about a different path. Our host is Gary Bauer, senior vice president of public policy here at the Dr. James Dobson Policy and Culture Center. Gary's guests are Brad and Laura Johnson. Dr. Brad Johnson is president of College of the Ozarks. On our last edition of Family Talk, we heard how this school lets students work their way through, literally graduating debt-free and also grounded in Christian faith. On today's conversation, we're going to go a bit deeper, discussing how the college guards that mission, teaching young people to love their country, and also connecting students with veterans in unforgettable ways. So let's rejoin Gary Bauer right now on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Gary Bauer: Welcome back to Family Talk. We're going to continue our conversation today with Brad and Laura Johnson about the College of the Ozarks. And let's get right into it.

Dr. Brad Johnson: Great.

Gary Bauer: Laura, you have some projects that you do on the campus. One of them is an OWL. Do I have that right? Like hoo?

Laura Johnson: Yeah, that's exactly right. And it stands for Ozarks Women in Leadership. And we have several initiatives, but one is an annual luncheon where we are raising scholarship dollars for students to have internships all across the country. We find that many of our students have to choose between, will I work maybe at my local restaurant, or will I reach to get that internship that I desperately need to build my career? And sometimes we see that struggle. So many of our students come from financially impoverished backgrounds. And so they want to reach, but yet the finances are very much a challenge. So one of the things that we do in OWL is raise scholarship dollars to cover room and board so that when

students come back from that internship, they have their room and board covered and have that that experience fantastic we have a number of students all across the country who are working in various industries. We're here in D.C. right now, and we're going to visit some of our interns tonight. Some are working for Concerned Women for America, or maybe their congressmen, some in the local media. It's just really exciting to see the experience that they're getting. And I think that's one thing that our supporters talk about is how our students give them hope that this generation of students that we're raising at the College of the Ozarks gives them hope because they see us reigniting the American spirit.

Dr. Brad Johnson: And part of reigniting that spirit is building the ladder for these students so that they can see themselves in an internship. You know, Laura mentioned that so many of these students come from backgrounds that having an internship in Washington, D.C., or other parts of the country are just so far beyond what they would ever imagine. And so helping them understand, first of all, that it is possible and what the advantages are, and then building in those opportunities and the college building relationships so that those internships are facilitated for our students is one of the major undertakings that we're about right now.

Gary Bauer: And it's great to hear, you know, that some of them are interning in groups like Concerned Women for America. I mean, the left's got interns all over the place. And of course, they're producing leaders for the future that are pro-abortion and all the other junk that we see out there. So we need to credential our young people by giving them these opportunities. So I'm going to get dibs in now for the James Dobson Family Institute that maybe we can have some of your students intern either here helping me out in Washington or in Colorado Springs or whatever.

Dr. Brad Johnson: Well, we have on campus, we have our local radio station, KCOZ. Okay. And so we might have an intern that would be ready to help you.

Gary Bauer: That would be fantastic. Do you have any lobbyists hanging around? Because I'm up there on Capitol Hill lobbying all the time.

Dr. Brad Johnson: That's right.

Laura Johnson: We have a lot of students interested in advocacy efforts.

Dr. Brad Johnson: That's right.

Gary Bauer: Great, great. I know that you both love America. In the brief time that we had to talk recently, your love for our country and the whole specialness of it, the First Nation that recognize that our liberty comes not from some government but comes from the god of the Bible. I mean that that revolutionized not only the kind of nation we would be but the impact of that has spread all over the world. And I know that, you know, you want your students to love America and want to

understand the sacrifices. So tell me a little bit about a program that involves connecting your students with veterans and what you hope the result of that is.

Dr. Brad Johnson: Right. Well, one of the pillars of our college, in addition to Christian and academics and the vocational program, is our patriotism pillar. And this is something that's very important to the college. And we flesh that out in a variety of ways. But one of the ways is through our patriotic travel education program. And so we will pair students with veterans and travel to war sites where those veterans have served. The connections with those students as the veterans tell their stories is incredibly valuable. Not only is it healing for the veteran, but it's also educational for the student. They get to hear firsthand the experiences that that veteran had while they were serving in those in those in those war zones. And so I got the opportunity to travel to Vietnam really last December and we took about 20 students and about seven veterans and I had a marvelous time and we were there for about 17 days and it was just...it was incredible. We went from South Vietnam to North Vietnam and then back down to the South, visiting different sites. And the veterans that went along with us, I know it was healing for them and such an educational experience for our students. And all pointing back to the reason why we do all of this is to point back to Jesus Christ. And you might not equate those two things, but that's really important that our students know that what you said earlier about our freedoms, they are endowed from our Creator first.

Gary Bauer: Yeah, no question about it. Well, yeah, that's a pretty ambitious project that you did. I mean, it's one thing that, you know, we're going to take some students down to the veterans' home or whatever and have them, you know, read a book to somebody in one of those facilities. But to take a group of students and veterans to Vietnam, I mean, that had to be a remarkable, I can't imagine the moments that must have happened as those students learned probably more truth about that war than they ever heard up until that time. But what it must have meant for the veterans themselves.

Dr. Brad Johnson: Sure. It's very, very meaningful in those veterans. A lot of times the relationship that is built is so strong that those veterans come back to campus for graduation. They go to the students' weddings when they get married. And so it's a relationship that will last a lifetime and so it's really a rich experience. But that the overseas travel is not the only thing that we do every fall we do something called the citizen trip and we take a group of students to Washington D.C., to visit the memorials, and we go to Museum of the Bible. But we also bring a veteran along with us. Usually it's from Vietnam because most of our World II veterans are not able to travel today. But we'll do a monument tour at night, and to hear some of these veterans tell their stories in front of the Vietnam Memorial is life-changing. And it certainly is for our students. And what an opportunity. And then we have something else called the Global War on Terror, that trip that commemorates 9/11 or remembers 9/11. And they'll travel to Washington, D.C., New York City, and then the Shanksville, Pennsylvania to visit those historical. And most of our students, I mean, all of our students were not even born when 9/11 happened, which is hard for me to imagine.

Gary Bauer: Well, you know what that says about us, right?

Dr. Brad Johnson: That's right.

Gary Bauer: Yeah, time waits for no man. Yes, well, they not only were born after 9/11, but speaking of the failure of schools. I don't know if it's because the schools can't deal with the subject without educating the things that they don't believe. You know, you can't talk about 9/11 without confronting radical Islam. I mean, that's what motivated the attackers. And we've seen, of course, on the university campuses, radical Islamic groups thrive on the campuses. So I suspect that's one of the reasons. But that's heartbreaking to me that we could have one of the most dramatic attacks. that ever took place on the United States. You have to go back to Pearl Harbor to see something comparable. And it hasn't been that many years ago. And young people are confused about what all that was about. And we even have some candidates right now that have gotten nominated to run for the House and Senate who are going around saying that it was our fault. 9/11 was our fault. A bunch of people hijacked planes and flew them into civilian targets, and somehow that was because America did something wrong.

Dr. Brad Johnson: Yeah, that's hard to even fathom. Ronald Reagan said we're only one generation away from our freedoms being extinct. I think that is so true, and we have got to turn this ship around pretty quickly. Our students need to be educated about what it is to be an American and how rich of an experience that is. You travel across the world, and when you get back home, you're really thankful to be here. Not that there aren't other good places around the world, but what we get to enjoy here in this nation is remarkable. I mean, it's just so remarkable and unparalleled. And we need our young people to understand that freedom, number one, is not free. There was a cost that was paid. And we have to continue to pay that price or we will lose the freedoms that we enjoy.

Laura Johnson: Something unique that we do on our campus every September is a September 11th memorial service. We're probably the only college in the nation that does a September 11th memorial service. You want to tell them about that?

Dr. Brad Johnson: So a lot of times we will have someone who was either impacted or was at one of these places to come and lecture, and we have a ceremony there that morning and remember. The ceremony is called Lest We Forget. And so it is the telling of that story and how we need to keep that story alive or it will get told in other ways that are just unreal.

Laura Johnson: We actually have a very special piece of history on our campus.

Dr. Brad Johnson: We do. And so one of the things that happened. After 9/11, of course, when they were working through the rubble, we were able to salvage one of the I-beams from the World Trade Center and brought that to campus. And it is part of our 9/11, lest we forget, memorial there on campus. And so that it stands as

a testament to what took place on that day and how our freedoms are important that we must defend those.

Gary Bauer: You know, the plane that was brought down in the field in Pennsylvania, we know so much about what happened on that plane because as far as we know, that was the first plane that understood those passengers about this was an attack taking place on America. And a lot of people had called home and they were getting more information. The reason I mention it is that we know from the calls that those passengers gathered in the back of the plane to discuss what they should do. And there was a disagreement. Some of the passengers thought the best thing to do would be to go back and sit down. The plane would have to land. There'd be negotiations and so forth. The other passengers said, no, look, America's being attacked. We're going to have to fight back or this plane's going to be used as a weapon to attack something else. So the great thing about the story is that, if there could be anything great under those circumstances, is that, so here's a bunch of Americans and they disagree. And somebody on that plane said, let's vote. So they voted and the people that wanted to fight back won. Those passengers ran down the aisle of that plane led by a Christian who yelled out, let's roll.

Dr. Brad Johnson: That's right.

Gary Bauer: And they ran into the teeth of men armed with box cutters. And because of their courage, we didn't suffer everything that was meant for us to suffer that day. I just find it fascinating that on the day that Osama bin Laden meant to harm our democracy, democracy was in place on that plane. People voted and then they fought.

Dr. Brad Johnson: They recognized that freedom was not free in that moment. And they had to fight to defend it.

Gary Bauer: No question.

Laura Johnson: One of the things that's really important on our campus is the American spirit and a love of country within our young people and a willingness to defend it. We do very intentional things on our campus to reinstill those American values in our students because, like we said, they weren't born when 9/11 happened. And when they hear these stories firsthand from people who were at the World Trade Center, who were at the Pentagon. We've had those speakers on our campus. It changes hearts.

Gary Bauer: I bet.

Dr. Brad Johnson: And every student at College of the Ozarks takes Patriotic Education 101, and then they have a follow-up class in their senior year on that as well.

Gary Bauer: And as I listen to you talk, I'm thinking about going back to college here.

Dr. Brad Johnson: We'd welcome you.

Gary Bauer: Are you going to make me cut grass?

Dr. Brad Johnson: We'll find a good job for you.

Laura Johnson: Every student actually has to take a citizen test. So we actually took it. There were some of us board spouses that we took it together. And it's wonderful to see the way that College of the Ozarks, that we're instilling these American values. and really helping ignite hope in the next generation.

Dr. Brad Johnson: That citizenship test is the very test that people have to take in order to become American citizens. And so our students are going to be very familiar with what it means to be an American.

Gary Bauer: That's a great idea because there's some irony there, right, that an immigrant might know the answers to the questions when our own native-born children often will not know the answers to those questions.

Dr. Brad Johnson: Too often we take those things for granted.

Gary Bauer: Yeah. So the empty cross. Laura, tell us about that.

Laura Johnson: Yes. This is a symbol on our campus that personally reminds me that God's timing is perfect. It is a beautiful piece on campus that actually was a brainchild of my husband here.

Dr. Brad Johnson: So when we first got to College of the Ozarks, I did listening sessions across the campus. And I kept hearing, you know, this is such a great place of vibrant faith, but we need to find a way to be more out front with our faith. And so I prayed and tried to figure out, okay, Lord, what does this mean? What does this mean? And I was driving around our campus one day, and at the entrance of the campus, there's a roundabout. And I just, the Lord just popped the idea of this empty cross into my mind. And I had known the sculptor, the artist for years and had a miniature sculpture in my office of that. And I thought, okay, that could be it. And when I started sharing that vision with some of the folks on campus, it caught fire and the board loved it. And we were able to move in that direction. It's a great story about patience and it had to be sculpted. As an administrator, Gary, you'll appreciate this, a lot of times we want to make things happen in a hurry.

Gary Bauer: Yes.

Dr. Brad Johnson: And things don't often happen on our time. Sometimes the Lord's timing is always perfect. So we had ordered the sculpture to be installed there on campus. And it took a while. And it's longer than the deadline. And I kept thinking, okay, what's holding this up? And January came, February came. And finally, toward the end of March, we heard that it was on a truck and it was

headed our direction. And then on April 6th, we were able to stand it up, which just happened to be the week of Easter on Maundy Thursday.

Gary Bauer: Wow.

Laura Johnson: And if you know anything about the sculpture itself, it's an outline of a cross.

Gary Bauer: Okay.

Laura Johnson: And so it signifies the artist is Max Greiner out of Kerrville, Texas. And the empty cross symbolizes that Christ is no longer on the cross and He is risen. And so that stands at the entrance of our campus as a reminder to all of us who live and work on campus that we see the world around us through the lens of the empty cross. And for every visitor that comes to campus, and we have roughly 400,000 people that visit the campus every year. For every visitor that comes to that campus, they get to see right through that empty cross to see what is important to us on our campus.

Gary Bauer: What a beautiful story. One of the things we emphasize at the James Dotson Family Institute is that America is lost unless Christian citizens be active Christian citizens. And that begins with, of course, educating them from the very beginning with the knowledge that they need to be in the public square. But maybe we could close by, I'd like to know whether you're optimistic about the future. I look at the problems facing America, whether it's racial reconciliation or the breakdown of the family or all these other issues, none of them can be solved without biblical principles and the involvement of Christian citizens. And I think from everything I've heard about your college, that's what you're creating is young men and women who will be Christian citizens. And it gives me hope for the future. As I get toward the point of life where I start thinking about who's going to be taken up to battle. Are you all optimists, pessimists? I know we are all optimists as followers, but what about optimistic or pessimistic about America?

Dr. Brad Johnson: Well, I think about the story of the gentleman that was walking on the beach with the starfish, and probably many of your listeners are familiar with that. College of the Ozarks is equipping students to shine the hope of Christ into our world. And one by one, even though we are a small institution, we believe that they can make a big difference. And so I think one of the things we talk about on our campus is stewardship. And, you know, we think about stewardship a lot of times from a financial perspective. But stewardship is also stewardship of influence. And so that's what we're trying to teach our students is how to steward their influence as young people, as future leaders in our country. And we want to equip them to do that well.

Laura Johnson: We're training up leaders who will take their seat at the table of influence and be salt and light in this world. And that is exciting. That's what gets us out of bed every day is to see the potential in our students, to see how they are working

hard, how they are overcoming so many challenges. And they give me great hope for what the world's going to look like in the future.

Gary Bauer: Well, I can tell our listeners that every time I've asked you a question, both during our time together now and then previously when we had a little bit of time to be in a relaxed setting, is every time I brought up the college, your faces both beam. So you're all in, or you wouldn't be able to do what you're doing. So Brad and Laura, thank you for being on the James Dobson Family Institute's program, Family Talk. And God's hand is obviously on you both and on the college. And we pray that you'll continue to have much success and come back periodically and maybe give us an update on what's happening.

Dr. Brad Johnson: Thank you. We'd love to. And thank you for your work as well.

Gary Bauer: And God bless all of you out there and be back to be with us on Family Talk.

You know, it is so encouraging to learn that there are still places pouring into the lives of young people, shaping them with character, faith, and a real love for their country. You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk as we heard the conclusion of Gary Bauer's conversation with Dr. Brad Johnson of College of the Ozarks, he's the president there, and Brad's wife, Laura Johnson. Now, if you missed the first part of this conversation, or if you'd like to share both parts one and two, you'll find both broadcasts at jdfi.org. You know, we've been so pleased to bring you Brad and Laura's story here on Family Talk because it reflects the very heart of what we do here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. And when you give to support this ministry, you help preserve and promote the family and the biblical principles upon which it's built. Your gift of any amount helps carry that mission to the next generation. And you can give securely when you visit drjamesdobson.org or just go to jdfi.org. It's one and the same. You can also call a member of our constituent care team. That phone number is 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825.

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 joining 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.

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