



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Breaking the Bonds of Welfare – Part 2

Guest(s): Star Parker

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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. I'm Roger Marsh. Today we are bringing you part two of a powerful conversation featuring our own Dr. James Dobson and Star Parker, founder and president of the Center for Urban Renewal and Education. Star Parker has consulted with Congress on welfare reform. She's the author of several books and speaks on college campuses all across the nation. Her message may ruffle some feathers at times, but it really does come from the perspective of someone who lived this struggle firsthand. Dr. Dobson knew Star Parker for decades and his respect for her work ran deep. Here's what he shared about his guest as he introduced the conversation.

Dr. James Dobson: I have been amazed by her story and her victory over an addiction to welfare that dragged her into a cycle of poverty. She was really quite hopeless for a period of time as well, but she was able to escape through God's power. Now, she has some provocative perspectives about welfare reform and the need of the church to step up and take care of the poor and the needy. And her thoughts may be a complete departure from what many people have come to believe in terms of government's responsibility for welfare. But I know it will challenge our listeners to hear what she has to say, because this is not theoretical. She lived it. She knows what she's talking about. And one of the things that I've heard her say is that when Jesus was speaking to 5,000 people who became hungry, He turned to His disciples and said, "You feed them." Now, I take that to mean the church has the responsibility to reach out to people in need.

We can't let them starve to death. The safety net belongs first to the church. That's going to irritate some people because the church has financial needs too, but I believe God will bless those that do what Jesus said, that in "as much as you do it under the least of these, my brothers, you'd do it unto me." And that's what she's trying to get across in the interview we're going to hear. Star Parker is the president and founder of CURE, C-U-R-E, which stands for the Center for Urban Renewal and Education. And she's a frequent speaker before Congress and to a variety of groups on the topic of welfare reform. She is highly respected and hated, I might say. She's written about the matter extensively, and I know

that our listeners are going to find her practical advice, both biblical and challenging.

Star, we were talking last time about the difficulties in your early life, the rebellion. You had four abortions, which you just didn't even seem to comprehend as a problem. You kind of trivialized the whole thing. And we're deeply dependent upon welfare and so on. Let's get right back into that content. You've got in your book, *Uncle Sam's Plantation*, a description of three kinds of poor people. Describe those categories for me.

Star Parker: What I'm doing in chapter one is talking about poverty and trying to define it because if we're going to be in a war that we spend the type of money we do over a billion dollars a day, I figured maybe we should know what poverty looks like. So I looked at the economically challenged and God loves them. I mean, these are the ones that I believe that when Jesus in the sermon of the mount was talking about how blessed this group is, this is what he had in mind. But then we also have the lazy poor. And this is the group that took tremendous advantage of the compassion of Americans in the welfare state. Who knows? That idea may have worked if we did not start this whole entitlement mentality growing to where people actually believe that they do not have to be a part of their own life. I had bought into that. That's one of the reasons in my rebellious state that I could live so lawlessly and carefree is because I figured somebody else would clean up any mess behind me. You just conditioned to believe these things when you're growing up in this type of situation.

Dr. James Dobson: They sort of owed it to you.

Star Parker: They owed it. That was one strong message in Black America and still is today. In fact, we have 40-

Dr. James Dobson: Is that related to the legacy of slavery?

Star Parker: So they try to attach it to the legacy of slavery. And I've even debated people like Jesse Jackson on this issue that keeps insisting that it's related, but yet when you look at most of the social pathologies playing in Black America today, these are new phenomenon. This wasn't 50 years ago. Black households were healthy during that time. They may have been poor, but they were healthy. And we did not see the escalation of just ill behavior, the violence, the lack of understanding that we should get an education and other things that we're seeing today. So I think a lot of it is just the idea that I don't have to think about it. And racism or the perception of racism is just an excuse. I use that excuse myself quite often that all America's racist anyway. Why do I need to mainstream? I'm not going to do that.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, there is racism in America, but you don't seem to be angry about it.

Star Parker: Well, because it's nothing that the politicians can do about it. I mean, let's face it, racism is like any other sin, a sin. And it's something that individuals will have to work through daily as they work through their lives. But it's not something that we can orchestrate some great master plan and one size fits all redistribution program about. How in the world would we ever even think that that could happen?

Dr. James Dobson: In fact, instead of solving it, it seems to me that the left tries to perpetuate that racism.

Star Parker: Well, they do.

Dr. James Dobson: Many of the movies create great anger and hostility and violence.

Star Parker: I addressed that in my book as well, that just the term minority is a political term. And there is racism, as you just pointed out, but there's also a whole industry that's built off of the perception of racism. And it's a few billion dollar industry. So you're absolutely right that those that can continue to further this idea and make people believe that America is not for them because somebody else is going to pull the rug from under them, give that group of people an excuse not to do what's best for their own lives.

Dr. James Dobson: Have you found doors closed to you because of being black?

Star Parker: Oh, I don't know. What kind of doors? Dr. Dobson, you know me. I'm going to go in any door, even if it's white. I don't know.

Dr. James Dobson: You don't ask.

Star Parker: I don't think about that either. I have fun being black. I just have a good time with it. And I believe that when God painted me black, it was for a purpose. And I think that even in our history, as dear as that is, and as big a struggle as it was, like in any struggle or any pain, there is a purpose and there's deeper meaning. As you mentioned earlier in our private discussion about the loss of my 14 year old, I'm having even a deeper understanding of the beauty in pain and in suffering. And so when you look at the struggle of blacks in this country, if we could just recognize that God placed me here for a purpose, then then we would realize that we have a significance even being here in America. And so I have a good time with it. And most of my friends, even my white friends, we have a great time with it.

Dr. James Dobson: You have such a healthy attitude, Star. That's why I like you and how much I appreciate what you're trying to do because you're really trying to teach some of those attitudes to both the black and the white community.

Star Parker: I think so, because most of the things that we're trying to solve politically, we can address ourselves just in our own personal relationships, just in our own personal time.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. Let's get back to the third.

Star Parker: The third. Okay. So the third group is the poor and spirit. And they are the ones that if we could do anything to help folks, this is the group that we should concentrate our attention on. So I spent time working and consulting on the federal welfare bill because I wanted the other group off, the lazy poor. Just cut them off. Let them understand that they have to mainstream their lives. The other group, the economically challenged, there are still things we need to do to reduce the tax burden, to stop the micromanagement monopoly over education in their communities, allow from school choice. But the poor in spirit, the broken, those that have a crisis in their lives, the only way that we're going to really help them is when we start engaging them one-on-one.

Dr. James Dobson: Describe such a person.

Star Parker: Oh, some of their pictures are just so sad and I give a lot of personal stories of people that I've come across in my book, but they would be someone that perhaps grew up in abusive household. And by the time they were of age to run away, they did run away and they perhaps then got involved in prostitution and they themselves had children and they're on drugs and they just cannot manage their lives. And their children now have no other perspective of what life looks like. They're not sending them to school whatsoever. And they're just lost. They're in the inner cities. They're on the street corners.

Dr. James Dobson: And it goes on generation by generation.

Star Parker: And it just goes on generation after generation. But the beginning I think was in real brokenness. And that's why it's so important that the body of Christ that has the real answers engage themselves with them so that we can tenderly bring them back into the fold.

Dr. James Dobson: And we start with morality. We go right back to those principles of morality and abstinence and the family. Before you fix the problem, let's prevent it. And that's one place to start.

Star Parker: It is absolutely. And that's why even though there were some that thought that welfare reform was a cruel measure, it was actually a big help measure because what it did was said, you are going to have to start looking at your sexuality and what you're doing with this. You cannot live irresponsibly anymore. And the beautiful thing that's an unknown secret because the media will not let them know, let the public know is how many stories that we have of welfare moms who now have reengaged themselves with their homes, with the husband, the father of the three children and other things. But you're absolutely right. If we

don't start focusing ourselves on family life and stop these messages that you can just live any way that you want to, we are going to see more brokenness.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you talk to kids? Do you talk to junior highers, for example?

Star Parker: Sometimes. Actually, well, after I left welfare, went into business a little while and then started working on these ideas in social policy, I started going more into the housing projects. And that's when I figured out I can't do this by myself and begin to engage the black churches. But I do some schools, mostly on the college level, to talk to those that are going into policy to try to help change their thinking when it comes to how we are going to help people. Is it public or private? But because the challenges, the way that the government has monopolized education, it's very difficult to bring a message of my sort into those school environments. It's one of the reasons I'm adamantly supportive of school choice. I really believe that every church should be a school and that they should deliberately go find these kids that are in broken situations and put them in these schools so that they can put a worldview in them that is consistent with the message maybe mom is delivering.

All of these mothers are not just clueless. Some of them are doing everything they can, but they have a very limited resource. And then they have the media telling them that, "Oh no, you don't want to listen to your mom." Then they have the school telling them, "Oh, you don't have to listen to that." Every institution in our society is 100% broken.

Dr. James Dobson: Broken. Let's wade into a really controversial area, star. Do the Jesse Jacksons of the world really get angry at you?

Star Parker: Oh, I get death threats.

Dr. James Dobson: I mean, you're saying the opposite of what it is.

Star Parker: Oh, they don't like me because when you look at it, as I mentioned in my book, the way that they've engineered this Uncle Sam's plantation is just like them plantations of the South and they have gatekeepers and these overseers are not pleased when one slave tries to escape and I'm trying to free the slave. So no, they're not happy and will do anything to keep the welfare state as it is.

Dr. James Dobson: Why is the black community so vulnerable at this point?

Star Parker: I think the black community is vulnerable for change at this point, but the reason that blacks have traditionally bought into Democrat policy and Democrat representation is because of the civil rights movement. Life was very, very difficult and Democrats were the ones that were there to say, "We're going to make sure that you're not discriminated against." If you look at what's happened in Black America over the last 50 years, the abortion, 40% of abortion, well, Margaret Sanger wanted to get rid of blacks. It was like genocide,

these guys. So they were effectively able to work with the churches and now it's hard pressed to find a pastor who will step out and say, "I'm pro-life and I'm going to make sure that we overturn *Roe v. Wade*." Well, the same thing happened in other areas as well, economic areas. When you look at the condition of black America, 65% of African Americans in the middle class work for some form of government.

So there is a natural hostility against Republicans who say limit government's role because they're looking at it personally to say, "But that means my job." It's one of the reasons they have investments in affirmative action policy because another 30% work for a government funded corporation or government subsidized corporation. You read affirmative action, they feel, there goes my job. I mean, the lies of the left are entrenched. As I mentioned, the Congressional Black Caucus leadership continues to say that racism is the reason that our communities are becoming worse in the problems that we're confronted with with poverty. If we could just get these guys to redistribute more money, then we could solve some of your problems. And people believe that.

Dr. James Dobson: And I'm in an organization called the Arlington Group and there's a great effort to reach out to black pastors and I'm really excited about what I see happening.

Star Parker: And see, in blacks coming to the table on a homosexual marriage issue have a legitimacy in making the case because the sexual misconduct that has already plagued our neighborhood has broken our families. So this is a time to heal ourselves, not to expand the definition of marriage so we can make a real clear case to get a federal bill passed. What I've attempted to do through CURE and even in my writings with my book and my articles with Scripps Howard is to help them connect this traditional worldview, their biblical worldview with the way they also look at policy issues. Because economically we do see that the Scripture sees it one way and what the Democrats have been promoting is another way. We also see this in schools. There is no reason that the government should control the education within our inner cities.

But in the media, you get distorted pictures and the black press ... I mean, we are seeing so much information in the black press and I sum it down to a couple of things. One is when you look at how people get their news, African Americans in general will see their news as opposed to read their news. And the interesting thing about reading your news is there's no inferences there. You can make a decision based on what you've just read through your own worldview. Whereas if you hear news-

Dr. James Dobson: They're telling you what to think.

Star Parker: Right. They're telling you what to think. And especially when it comes out of black leaders who they trust. We are starting to see a little bit of movement away from just this blind trust, but we're not seeing the embracement on the other side yet, mostly because there's no relationship with the Republicans or

with conservatives. But I'm going to keep pushing the envelope because I think that until we purge ourselves of these sins and until we really adopt a 100% biblical worldview, we're not going to solve any of these other social crises.

Dr. James Dobson: What are you telling your daughter, Star? What are you telling her about welfare? She knows it by now, doesn't she?

Star Parker: Interesting that you would ask that when you think about where I began with this girl, I mean, I used to leave her home. I was so into drugs and stuff. I would leave her home and she was barely old enough to answer the door or the phone and I would just leave her there and not even know what time I would return, but by being able to place her in a Christian school and be able to then adopt a new worldview and try to help her with that, she married young. She's married today and her and her husband are doing pretty well and she works with me part-time running my office. And I just believe that when you show kids one way to go and you live that example, that nine times out of 10, they're going to be able to live it. But we know that it's not always true.

I mean, we cannot look at a one size fits all model or say that if I do step one, two, three, and four, it's all going to work out because my second daughter is as beautiful a child as she was and was just my right hand. Everyone knew her very well and just loved the Lord, made one bad choice and it cost her her life.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. She died under very unfortunate circumstances and I know you don't want to go into it and I won't ask you, but our people should pray for you.

Star Parker: Thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: That's very, very hard.

Star Parker: I don't mind talking about it because I think that, in fact, I know because I have had to work these things through personally, I know that when the Lord looks at our lives and He tells us that He loves us. And when people are in this type of pain where they have to actually bury somebody that they love dearly and they cannot understand all the questions surrounded. And then you go through the hundred questions in your mind of what if, should have, and all these things, that the Lord is just so precious that He just gave me new meaning and a sense of being in Psalm 23, Psalm 139 and Psalm 145. And this just became like my medicine every day.

Dr. James Dobson: She would have been with you on this trip.

Star Parker: Oh, absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: You were very, very closer to her.

Star Parker: That was my little sidekick. But unfortunately, her life ended soon. But if I look at all that God delivered me from, to even have had the ability to have her, because I've counseled women who have had one abortion one time and they agonized over that and now they can't have any children.

Dr. James Dobson: And you had four abortions.

Star Parker: And I look at it and then got this beautiful gift and I got to keep her for 14 years. I really look at the blessing in what I had there. I would love to have had her for longer, but just the 14 years I had, I'm just very encouraged by.

Dr. James Dobson: Star, I find you fascinating to talk to. The title of your book is *Uncle Sam's Plantation: How Big Government Enslaves America's Poor and What We Can Do About It*. And I believe that. And we were talking at the break time about the fact that if we're not careful, your message starts to sound like a lack of compassion, as though you really don't care about hurting people and poor people. That's not true at all. You're looking for what's best for them.

Star Parker: What's best for them.

Dr. James Dobson: And government is not best for them.

Star Parker: No, it isn't. When Jesus said, "Go and sin no more," He did her a favor.

Dr. James Dobson: And the Lord has done a work in your life

Star Parker: He's done work in my life.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you realize, I'm sure it's a rhetorical question, but what the probabilities were when you were 18 years old that you would be sitting here today talking about this subject and writing this book and being influential like you are in this way?

Star Parker: Well, I have thought about it and I thank God that He's called me through this great work because I figure if He can save me, then surely, He can do it for the rest of them that are out there just in despair. And so I've just dedicated my life to being a hope and an encouragement. And in the political front, I figured I'll do the Harriet Tubman. While they're trying to come up with some political formula, I'm going to go get one out at a time because they just don't belong to Uncle Sam. God has a much bigger plan and purpose for their lives. And there is something in it for all of us because when we have a healthy society, we don't need government intruding in every area of our life. And for people that are in welfare and they're struggling through how they're going to meet the deadlines as well as how they're going to reengage their lives in society, I think that they should be encouraged to know that God will help them for one thing, but then also when they go through the classes that they're instructed to go through

now, that they should pull out the jewels that are available within those classes to establish themselves some goals.

And they might be little goals in the beginning. One of the things that I teach in my goal setting workshops to welfare moms is that perhaps they should share an apartment with somebody else so that they can share babysitting responsibilities. So one can go back to night school and do other things to start reengaging in their own life. I think that if people are feeling benevolent, then they should go to their church and to their pastor and say, "Maybe we could start a little program here." And if we're far from a crises area, which really they're not, I mean, the people are hurting all over society. It's not just in our inner cities, but if they are far and they happen to live in an area that perhaps is doing pretty well, then maybe that church should look for ways and partnerships with others that do have need, that need is overwhelming.

One of the things I find in the inner city is the problems are so overwhelming to these churches that they don't know where to begin. They don't have the resources to do it all and they don't know which part they should do. So if there's a specialist out in the suburbs, maybe they can teach that to the inner city urban ministry and then that church can become one of its strategic ministry partners.

Dr. James Dobson: And this is the answer. This is the answer. The answer's the church. The answer is Jesus Christ.

Roger Marsh: Even though the government tries to be everyone's provider, it can't offer what people need most. That is personal care, genuine relationships, and the hope of the gospel. You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and a challenging conversation featuring Dr. James Dobson himself and Star Parker. They've been discussing welfare, poverty, and the church's calling to serve the vulnerable. Dr. Dobson had some closing thoughts about today's conversation that are worth hearing, so I encourage you to stick around to hear what he had to say. And if you missed any portion of this two-day conversation or if you want to share it with a friend, we encourage you to visit jdfi.net. Well, if you're a mom who could use some daily encouragement, I want to tell you about a powerful resource we've created. It's called "Empowering Moms." And this email series was designed specifically for mothers who are running households, raising children, and trying to do it all. You'll receive time tested truths and daily encouragement to help you be the best mom you can be. These messages offer practical parenting advice along with spiritual renewal to inspire you every day. To sign up for our free "Empowering Moms" email series, go to jdfi.net, search for that title, "Empowering Moms," and you'll be led right to that resource.

The conversations we bring you on Family Talk all point to the driving mission of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute: to preserve and promote the institution of the family and the biblical principles upon which it is based. Day after day, we are working to introduce as many people as possible to the gospel of Jesus Christ, while also defending the sanctity of human life, religious freedom, and

righteousness in our culture. But we can't continue this work without partners like you who share our commitment to biblical truth.

Your gift today helps us keep broadcasting these important conversations to families all across America. And you can make a secure donation when you go to jdfi.net. That's jdfi.net. Or you can give us a call. Our constituent care team is ready to help when you call 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. And now, here once again, is Dr. James Dobson and his closing thoughts on today's conversation with Star Parker.

Dr. James Dobson: What she had to say today, I hope strikes a chord in the hearts and minds of our listeners. At least they ought to think about it. Give her a hearing, especially with regard to the responsibility of Christians to be the safety net, to reach out to those who can't care for themselves. It's our God-given task as the Christian community to take care of the needy and the poor. I mean, Jesus talked about that repeatedly in the gospels, and yet the government has taken it upon itself to give handouts, and pardon me, but I think it's often done for political reasons to make people dependent on government, and then you vote for those that are offering entitlements. As Star Parker said, the government does not have an arm to put around these people, but we do.

Now, let me make it clear. Our hearts go out to the families who are in need, who are on welfare, who are trying to raise children and keep a roof over their heads and can't find a job. I mean, there are needy people out there. And Jesus had needy people around Him, and He very frequently reached out to those who were blind or paralyzed or had other needs. So we can't ignore them. That's not what we do, but we can't depend on the government because there's so much waste in government welfare and entitlement programs, there is a better way and it's us.

Roger Marsh: Amen. Well, I'm Roger Marsh and from all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Thanks 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.

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