



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Courageous Christianity

Guest(s): Hugh Hewitt

Air Date: August 21, 2024

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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 to Family Talk, I'm Roger Marsh. Jesus warned His followers that their lives would not be easy ones. Their confession and acceptance of Him as Savior and Lord would lead to constant ridicule and attacks from the culture. The merciless persecution of the church has been well documented throughout the centuries, and yet Christ reminds us that our faith is grounded in the truth of Scripture as we read these words of Jesus from John 17:14, "I have given them your word," he prayed, "and the world hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world." And God is always with us in spite of this disadvantage we seemingly have. Think about this. If we don't wholeheartedly trust what the Bible tells us about us and about God, then why would we continue to believe it in the first place?

Hugh Hewitt: I'm a fool if Scripture'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 have 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. 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."

Roger Marsh: That was today's guest, Hugh Hewitt, who is an attorney, a law professor, and a broadcast journalist. He has been a professor of constitutional law at Chapman University Law School since 1995. Professor Hugh Hewitt also hosts *The Hugh Hewitt Show*, a popular radio program, with over two million listeners nationwide, every week. During former President Reagan's administration, Hugh Hewitt served for six years in various positions. He's a graduate of the University of Michigan Law School and the esteemed Harvard College. Hugh Hewitt has appeared on national television news outlets and is a *New York Times* best-selling author. He is married to his lovely wife, Betsy, and together they have three grown children and several grandchildren.

Today's program was recorded several years ago but shockingly is even more relevant today than it was back then. Our own Dr. James Dobson will now sit down with Hugh Hewitt to discuss Hugh's book entitled *The Embarrassed Believer: Reviving Christian Witness in an Age of Unbelief*. They will be addressing why so many Christians are either afraid or too uncomfortable to shear their faith. Hugh Hewitt will also explain the decline of Christianity here in the United States. Dr. James Dobson begins today's episode by asking Professor Hugh Hewitt about the inspiration for the book. So let's join them right now, right 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. 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 ... 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 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. 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. 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 nonbelievers, 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 scriptural 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. I've been doing this for four or five years now. "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: Well, I pray that we will all be obedient to the Lord when an opportunity comes to share our faith. We never know what great things are meant to come from those moments, even if it's simply to plant a seed that is meant to grow later. We've been listening to an inspiring conversation featuring Dr. James Dobson and his guest Hugh Hewitt today here on Family Talk. And if this presentation inspired you to more actively and publicly live out your faith, you can learn how to get a copy of Hugh Hewitt's book called *The Embarrassed Believer* by dropping by our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

In listening to today's program, we were reminded how important it is for Christians to defend God-given truth in this culture, and that applies to cultural issues as well. We here at the Dobson Family Institute have established the Dobson Culture Center to help equip families and individuals develop a stronger biblical foundation. The DCC strives to strengthen Christians by teaching that a biblical worldview is the cornerstone for marriage, parenting, and preserving human dignity. As believers, we always need to stand for truth even when it's hard to do. Imagine the positive impact on our culture we can have if more of us will seek change that will provide hope and a better future for many generations to come.

Now you can access the resources available at the Dobson Culture Center site by clicking the Culture Center tab on the top of our homepage, drjamesdobson.org. And while you're there, you can sign up for the free "Lighting Up Culture Weekly Report" from Dr. Owen Strachan, the senior director of the Dobson Culture Center. It'll help you stay up to date on content and resources from the DCC. Now remember, you can also start receiving the "Lighting Up Culture Weekly Report" simply by clicking the link at the bottom of today's broadcast page as well when you go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

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