



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: An Everyday Hero with a Passion for the Wonder of God's Creation – Part 1

Guest(s): David Rives

Air Date: July 20, 2026

- Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute, supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.
- Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. We are so glad you've joined us today, and we have a very special guest joining us for the broadcast. David Rives, who's the founder of the Genesis Science Network, a science educator, author. We're going to talk about the museum. We're going to talk about everything that's been happening in his world. David is a remarkable man who works at the intersection of science and faith. He helps people explore how scientific discovery points toward the reality and the design of God's creation. And several years ago, you may remember, David joined Dr. James Dobson for a memorable conversation about the evidence for biblical truth that's found in the natural world. And I know it's a subject that Dr. Dobson always appreciated, and he often pointed to creation as the reflection of God's handiwork. So having David back on the program again is just a very special moment for each of us here at the JDFI. David Rives, welcome back to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.
- David Rives: Roger, thanks for having me.
- Roger Marsh: You know, it's great to have you here. And we were together in Nashville a couple months ago at the very special event that we had at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention where we were honoring Dr. Dobson's legacy. And I know that you and Doctor shared a very, very special bond. And I would love for you to take a couple moments here now that we know Doctor is resting in glory and enjoying the fruits of that labor there, hearing well done, good and faithful servant. But what was it like when you first met him? Did he reach to you? Did you reach to him? How did that all come together?
- David Rives: Yeah, I vividly recall that. I was actually leading a family paleontology dig in the middle of Kansas. I had about 40 people out in the field and I got a call. And I had no reception, but I was like, "Wait, I think I hear you. Wait just a moment." And so I got to the closest area that I could where there was good service. And I dialed the number back. It was not Dr. Dobson, but it was his team. And they said, "Doctor wants to meet you. And would you be willing to do that?" I said, absolutely. I said, it would be an honor. So about a month later, Doctor and Shirley, they came out. We met for about two days and we spent two days

together. He got to know me a little bit. We got to have conversations over dinner. I vividly recall a T-bone steak sitting there that I don't think I took one bite of because we were so engrossed in conversation. But it was an incredible, incredible experience to get to know him. And the influence that he's had over families because our mission for, you know, ever since I was 18 years old has been to reach families with the truth of God's Word, using creation, using science, using the world around us to point right back to an incredible creator who is an awesome designer. And He's left these clues, the very fingerprints of His design throughout the universe for us to find.

You know, with Dr. Dobson, astrophysics and astronomy was, of course, a passion. And it's one of my greatest passions. When I was 16, 17, I started taking photos of space using telescopes and cameras sort of connected to the back of those telescopes. And, you know, there's a little bit of an art to astrophotography. And maybe I didn't get the best photos to start with, but eventually I started to learn. I vividly recall the first photo that was decent. It was actually more than decent. It was of the Great Orion Nebula. I was 16 years old, and I snapped this picture through a telescope, a long exposure photo, and my jaw hit the floor because I realized that you know, what I'd seen in *Sky and Telescope* magazine, what I'd seen through Hubble space photography, it was real. And not only was it real, I had no idea that a guy like me, that some common person could ever take photos like that. And it reminded me of that verse in Psalm 19 that says the "heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows his handiwork." It says that day unto day utter speech and night after night shows knowledge, but there's no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. So it's almost like the heavens are shouting at us, Roger. It's almost like the heavens are shouting out, we have a designer. You are not star stuff. You are not an accident of the cosmos. You are wonderfully made in the image of God with a purpose for your life. And at that moment, at 16, I realized that this was way more than just a hobby of reading astrophysics books and loving looking through telescopes. I realized that this was an opportunity to reach the world with the truth of God's creation, using astronomy, biology, geology, all of the sciences to point back to how everything declares God's glory.

Roger Marsh: Well, David Rives, you have set the standard, I think, for a lot of families who are looking at this and saying, OK, I have a child, son, daughter, grandson, granddaughter who's interested in this type of stuff. And they're kind of science geeky. And I know it's interesting in my own family. I was a D chemistry student and science is not my forte, but I have a daughter who's a research scientist. So, I mean, I understand the science part. But one of the things that always amazes me, and I'd love to get your take on this, is the fact that here you are saying, look, there's plenty of scientific evidence for creation, intelligent design, the value of human life, it's all scientifically provable, but it all points back to God. Why do you think so many people think that you either have to choose science or faith instead of the two of them working together?

David Rives: Yeah, it's a great question because what we find is if you go back 50 years,

if you go back 100 years, you saw this grappling with this issue. Dr. Wernher von Braun, who basically sent men to the moon, he was running NASA before NASA was an official institution. Dr. Wernher von Braun, a rocket scientist who was brilliant in his own right, he said a lot of people look at science and religion as antagonists. He said they're not. They're sisters. While science tries to better understand creation, the world around us, religion tries to better understand the creator. And here's the point, Roger. You can't have creation without a creator, right? You can't have design. And we see design all over the natural world. You can't have design without a designer. And so everything has always been pointing us back to this. The greatest scientist of all time. I'm talking about Galileo and Kepler and Newton and Maxwell all the way up to the modern scientists of today, the ones who are really innovating, really discovering new things, really making a huge impact, most of them see this design pattern and realize that it points to a designer. And yet there is this push, this secular push, this atheistic push to try to get us away from the truth of our creator, the God of the Bible, and say, yeah, but, you know, science shows that nature is all that there is. Science shows we don't need God. We have everything we need to explain it all without God. And our point is, that's not what science is showing. That's what scientists are telling you. And there's a huge gulf between science and scientists. Science is raw science is data science doesn't lie right you can trust the science but you can't trust the scientists because scientists all have an agenda. They're all trying to get to some single point and usually that point has to do with funding, right? Who's funding them for their research or what is their ideology? What did they start with? So what are they trying to prove and how are they manipulating that scientific data? The point of it is you can trust that all good science, real observation is pointing us right back to the truth of God's Word.

Roger Marsh:

David Rives is our guest today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. He's the director and founder of the Wonders Center and Science Museum. It's the largest science museum in the nation. It presents science through a biblical design-based worldview and also features one of the world's top 10 state-of-the-art planetariums as well. I want to get into that now because, I mean, I was just mentioning it in your title. The story of how this all came together, I mean, the fact that you, your journey into the media is just really remarkable to me. I mean, I'm 40 plus years in the industry, I've never seen anything like your story. I think the closest thing to it might be Glenn Eshelman with Sight & Sound, taking the slides of nature, putting together these slide presentations, and next thing you know, they're a movie studio. But the fact that God led you to take these pictures with your telescope and things of that nature, and then where you took them, you kind of followed a similar route to Glenn, didn't you? I mean, when you first started out, you were doing presentations in churches and saying, hey, guys, look what I found. And I'm sure there were a lot of churches that said, "Wow, this guy's really onto something." And other people have said, "Who's this kid with a telescope?" Talking about your early ventures into the media, because I think it's important for us to understand that even some people in the faith community at first were a little hesitant and reluctant to kind of validate what you were finding.

David Rives:

Absolutely. Well, you know, I'm filming this from TV studios inside the Wonders Center and Science Museum, the largest science museum in Tennessee, the largest science museum in the world from a Christian perspective, with families pouring through and school groups, public schools, Christian schools, private schools, busing children in right and left. We just opened two and a half years ago, but it didn't start with the largest science museum in Tennessee. It started at 16 taking those photos. As you said, turning those into PowerPoint presentations, I would go out and I would speak in churches or at science conferences or at events. And I would show photos of space that I myself had taken and then say, "And this is showing us that the heavens declare the glory of God, that the universe is not some cosmic accident. Therefore, it's pointing us back to not just the God of the Bible, but ultimately to Jesus Christ and to the mission that He had, because what He was doing is He was salvaging creation." We messed creation up when we sinned, right? And all of creation has been groaning ever since. So God had a plan through it all. He said, well, you know what? To fix this sin issue, I'm going to send my only begotten son to live, die, and be raised again to pay the penalty, the death penalty for all of eternity so that you can be a part of My family, right? And so when I realized that everything connected, that the world around me, even the imperfect world, even the world full of death and disease, was still pointing us back to the greater picture, the picture of the gospel itself. I realized that we had something that was truly unique that we could tell everyone, and it took the world by storm. By 19, I had produced my first documentary, *The Heavens Declare the Glory of God*, and a mere six months later, at the NRB, at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention, all of a sudden, it started to get airtime on Christian TV. It was translated into Russian, German, Ukrainian. All of these things started to explode. And about a year later, I started doing short two-minute videos on science and the Bible, two-minute video commentaries, a weekly commentary in video format. And the things that I would talk about, I would take a heady scientific topic, something that most people don't fully grasp, and I would break it down into a layman's level where anyone could understand how this science works or how this thing in genetics works or how this discovery in dinosaurs works or how this principle in astronomy works.

And then I would relate that to our daily walk with Christ or to a spiritual lesson. And I was blown away because I started getting, you know, 20,000, 50,000, 70,000 views per week on these short two minute videos. And this was before TikTok, I'm telling you. I mean, you know, we have millions of views on our TikTok channels, but this was way before TikTok. This was something that was exploding. And I noticed I would get several thousand comments most weeks, most of them from atheists or agnostics.

Roger Marsh:

Sure.

David Rives:

And they were, of course, critical. And me, as a 19, 20-year-old, I learned, developed a thick skin very quickly. And I realized that most of the time, the critics, it was an ad hominem attack. It was an attack against me as opposed to an attack against the science that I was presenting. And I said, whoa. This is the

greatest thing that could ever happen on planet Earth because what this means is that those 2,000 atheists or agnostics actually had to watch the content to comment on it. And number two, their conscience bothered them so bad that they felt the need to attack me about this. I realized that we have this witnessing tool, this evangelistic tool of using science and the world around us to point back to the God who created it all. That's how it started.

Roger Marsh:

Well, it's a humble beginning, but look at what God has done with everything that you have been led to pursue. And I commend you for that, David. We've mentioned this in conversations in the past, and I know Dr. Dobson held your work in such high regard. And if you want to learn more about the Wonders Center and Science Museum, go to wondercenter.org. We've got that linked up at jdifi.org. You know, I think about something that happened within the past decade, maybe five or six years ago, as we were going through a global pandemic, or we were told it was. And there was the head of the, you know, leading the charge, Dr. Anthony Fauci, who said two phrases that really stuck with me. And I want your comment on these, David, because first he said, "trust the science." And then he followed that up by saying, "and I am the science." And I think it kind of encapsulates where the secular left is with regard to science versus faith. And you're saying, no, wait a minute, we can trust the science because we know who the ultimate scientist is. I mean, the creator of all that. Talk about why you have been able to have such success with people, not that yours is an evangelistic ministry, though there is an evangelistic component to it. Why do you think that you...people are drawn to you. You've mentioned the ad hominem attacks. That's kind of part and parcel with the left. But how do you think that God is continuing to use you and grow your ministry in spite of this "opposition" that you face?

David Rives:

Absolutely. Number one, trust the science is a true statement because think about it. NASA sends a probe up to a planet and they gather a bunch of information. They gather a bunch of data. That's science. Those are facts, right? The facts are that this planet is a particular temperature, that it is composed of a particular type of gas, that the magnetic field around it is such and such, right? Those are scientific facts. And you can trust that. But then the probe comes back and the scientists, the NASA scientists, download all of the information off of the probe. Or it's sent remotely. And then they start pouring over it and they say, well, because this planet is composed of these types of gases, I guess this gas must have come from a protoplasm of the universe, from a from a cosmic substance of maybe a Big Bang or something that then coalesced into this planet about four and a half billion years ago. Right. So they put...did you realize that that statement that I made, which is very accurate to the ones that are being made in the scientific community, is full of these magic words and fuzzy words? We postulate that 4.5 billion years ago, this planet coalesced and formed from matter throughout the universe. Wait a second. So we postulate, or our best guess, that's a fuzzy word. That means that they don't know. That's not real science. It coalesced. It formed itself. Whoa, that's a magic word. We don't typically see things form themselves, right? We see designers fashion something. We see engineers build the microphones in this studio. We see all

sorts of people making things. But we don't typically see things making themselves, at least not orderly things, right? We see chaotic things happen by accident. We see orderly things happen by design. So that, again, points back to a designer. And that designer is not just some ethereal creature. That designer, because we're left with God's word of truth. And it tells us "in the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth," the very origin of time, space, and matter in the first verse of scripture. And then you go forward all the way through and you see how He created it throughout the Bible. This is not aliens. This is not some random intelligence. No, this is the God of the Bible. And He is scientifically vindicated. Our faith is not a blind faith. It's an evidence-based faith that points us right back to our Creator and Savior.

Roger Marsh:

David Rives is our guest today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. He's the founder of the Wonders Center and Science Museum, and we've got a link for wonderscenter.org up at jdfi.org, as well as davidrivesministries.org, and that's David Rives, R-I-V-E-S. David, when you started out, you were a kid, so you're basically talking to them with ears to hear, right? Growing up as a Christian, and it sounds like you grew up in a pretty solidly Christian home. Talk about what it was like for you as a youngster, as it were with your parents, you know, what they were speaking into your world and how that really fostered this idea from the time you discovered, I would imagine, like your first fossil saying, oh, wow, mom, dad, this is so cool. You know, thinking, okay, well, that could be a ministry. I'm sure a lot of parents who are listening to our conversation right now are wondering, does my child have that, you know, attribute? Do they have that aptitude, you know, to do something like that? Or is it just they like to play with rocks in the dirt?

David Rives:

When I was a child, I grew up in a strong Christian home. Most of my friends' sort of poured into me these strong Christian beliefs. I received the Lord when I was seven years old. And at eight, here in Middle Tennessee, right in our backyard of the Wonder Center, within an hour of Nashville, almost my entire life is where I grew up. And I vividly recall at eight years old; I'm digging in my backyard. in the dirt as boys do and I pick up a rock I pick that rock up and I'm looking at it I'm like this is not a rock this is a type of a fossil. I don't know exactly what it is but this is some type of a fossil and so I start flipping through these identification guides these fossil identification guides and I realized that what I'm holding in my backyard in Tennessee is a marine creature called a crinoid that lives at the bottoms of oceans, a deep sea creature. And then I go on and I start to find corals and bivalves and seashells and all of these types of things in my backyard. And I realized that all of these things are telling us a story. So I put them in a fishing tackle box. I didn't think much of it at the time. My family, my parents probably didn't think much of it at the time. But I put this in a fishing tackle box. And at nine years old, I had collected way more than the fishing tackle box can hold.

Roger Marsh:

Oh, boy.

David Rives: I'm breaking down a story that would take us, you know, 20 minutes or several hours really to fill. But long story short, I realized I needed a bigger box. So I got a bigger box and I put that fishing tackle box in and I put the other rocks and samples and minerals that my friends had given me and that I had collected in this bigger box. And I scotch taped a sign to the front of it that said "Rives Fossil Museum." I just, you know, printed it out on my home computer. And I would drag my friends over to this box to show them these fossils. But I would say, you know, every fossil has a story and all of these things are. pointing us back to the truth of the Bible, the truth of our Creator, the idea that God is real. And little did I know at nine years old that that would one day turn into the Wonders Center and Science Museum, just 35 minutes due west of Nashville, right off of I-40. Little did I know that we would be opening this a few years down the road as this commemoration of god's science of where science is actually pointing us with full-size dinosaurs, a planetarium that ranks top 10 in the world live animals walking down the hall, animatronics, rocks that fell from space that you can put your hands on. Real dinosaur bones that you put your hands on. Outdoor mining sloughs 65 feet long where kids can mine for treasures. All of these types of things are pointing us back to not just to discovery, not just to something that's fun or entertaining, but it really is fun and entertaining. But the kids who are coming here, the adults who are coming here, the senior groups who are coming here, the churches who are coming here are leaving not just inspired by the science, but inspired by the ultimate fingerprints of God's design that the science is revealing to us. And that's what gets me excited.

Roger Marsh: Sounds like it. And we're just scratching the surface. And figuratively with David Rives today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, talking about the Wonders Center and Science Museum, the wonderful things that they are doing through there, the *Changing the Narrative* podcast and the *Genesis Science Report*, all the wonderful things that David has been led to in this ministry and God's hand has been blessing. We've got links for everything up at jdfi.org. David, our first program has gone by much too quickly. Can you come back again next time we can continue this conversation?

David Rives: I would consider it an honor, Roger.

Roger Marsh: Well, what a joy to spend this time with David Rives today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, exploring how the wonders of creation point us straight back to the Creator. By the way, if you'd like to hear this conversation again or share it with a friend or a curious young scientist in your life, you'll find the full broadcast at jdfi.org. We also have a link there for the Wonders Center and Science Museum, that's wonderscenter.org, as well as davidrivesministries.org. And David Rives' last name is spelled R-I-V-E-S.

You know, here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we share David's heart for reaching the next generation with truth. You can see why Dr. Dobson and David Rives got along so well. The truth of God's Word, the truth woven into the world He made, and the truth that every life is wonderfully made in His image. That's the work your support makes possible. And right now, your generosity

can go twice as far. In honor of America's 250th birthday, you can provide special help through the month of July. The JDFI board of directors has authorized the release of designated funds for our America 250 match. That means that every gift you make to the JDFI will be matched dollar for dollar, doubled in size and impact, helping us carry biblical wisdom to families all across the country and literally all around the world. So please take advantage of this July \$250,000 matching grant and double your impact today. You can make a secure donation online at jdfi.org or you can call a member of our constituent care team. That 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 as we'll continue my conversation with David Rives, an everyday hero with a passion for the wonder of God's creation. That'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.