



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: An Immigrant's Story: From Rebellion to Redemption – Part 1

Guest(s): Emeal "EZ" Zwayne

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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 Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. On the last Family Talk broadcast, we heard the remarkable story of Emeal "EZ" Zwayne, a rebellious teenager whose life was transformed after surrendering to Jesus Christ. On today's Family Talk broadcast, EZ returns to share what happened next and to retell how God began using his life to reach others with the gospel. So now let's rejoin this conversation featuring our own Dr. James Dobson, former co-host Meg Meeker, and our guest EZ Zwayne as they set up today's edition of Family Talk.

Emeal Zwayne: I was a rap artist back in that time, believe it or not. I had my artist producer contract signed and my producers produced some of the top artists in the industry at the time. And so here I was on my way to the big time. I had kind of this pride and arrogance. And so my first day on that campus, I connected with one of the kids that liked rap music and he said, "Hey, come and hang out with us at lunch." So I did that. And one day turned into two, two into a week, a week and a month. And one day we walked off campus to go to lunch and they said, "Hey, we want you to become a part of our gang." These kids were part of a gang called the Crips.

Dr. James Dobson: Crips.

Dr. Meg Meeker: Yeah.

Emeal Zwayne: The notorious Crips.

Dr. James Dobson: That's bad news.

Emeal Zwayne: Real bad news. There I was, 15 years old, standing there a mess, finding myself a member of one of the most notorious gangs in the United States. Basically, the Crips is a gang like any other gang where you have people that want to belong and they're driven together in a brotherhood of sorts. And it revolves around immorality and around crime and rebellion.

Dr. James Dobson: Violence.

Emeal Zwayne: Violence. Yeah. And so that's kind of what it was all about. And I became a part of that world. And boy, did my life just spiral out of control at that point. I found myself doing things I never thought I would do, saying things I never thought I would say. So it just all went out of control. In the midst of all that, I was so distraught one day as one of my sisters began to sort of tell me as a whole family was gathered together that I was worthless, useless, wasn't going to amount to anything.

And something in me just snapped. I remember I jumped up, lunged for the kitchen drawer, grabbed a knife, just began to stab violently at my wrist. I just wanted to die. And here I was, in light of my age and where I was, I had everything a kid my age could want. I had popularity. I had power through the gang. I had pleasure through different things, but I was lost. And I didn't understand that I was desperate for the God who created me and gave me life.

Dr. James Dobson: How'd you find Him?

Emeal Zwayne: Well, a good friend of mine who grew up with me in our neighborhood one day came to me and said, "Hey, my parents invited me to this event called the Harvest Crusade. And they wanted me to ask you to come along." This was about a month before we were supposed to go. And so the day came about when we were supposed to go and actually that morning, about one or two in the morning, he and I were parked off a street in our neighborhood, drunk out of our minds. And I remember I looked at him, I said, "Man, this is the greatest feeling I've ever had. I want to feel this way for the rest of my life." Having no idea how the rest of my life was going to be transformed only hours later. So I get home, go to sleep, get up the next morning.

This was August 15th, 1991, Thursday. And I went about my same sinful routine and evening rolled around. I said, "Hey mom, I'm going to some Christian thing with my friend Bill tonight." She said, "You liar." I thought here I am for the first time in my life telling her the truth that she's not believing me. So we got in an argument and I was a real angry young man. In fact, my bedroom wall was full of posters and it wasn't because I loved the rap groups that were on there only, but it was because there were holes all over my walls. I'd get so angry, I'd often just punch holes in my bedroom wall. And so I started to punch the walls. And at that moment, my friend pulls up and we get in his car and we start heading over to the crusade. And I was angry the whole way there. He said, "Man, what's going on?" I said, "Nothing." Goes, What's happening? I said nothing.

Dr. James Dobson: This is the Greg Laurie crusade.

Emeal Zwayne: Absolutely. With Pastor Greg Laurie, right? There were about 20,000 people there come to find that night. This was at the Pacific Amphitheater in Costa Mesa. And I walk in there and I was just blown away. And I remember sitting there and as the music began to play, my heart started to soften. I remember looking at these people in the crowd. They were singing to God and raising their hands and their faces were beaming with joy. And I remember looking and

thinking, "Man, these people are acting as if though God is really here." And little did I know that He was and they knew it. And so when Greg Laurie got up and began to preach the gospel, it was as if though there was no one else in that entire amphitheater except the two of us. And everything that I had been thinking about in my own heart and mind, he began to touch on.

Even though I was as bad as I was, oftentimes as people I think it's natural, we compare ourselves to others. So when I looked at God's standard, I realized my sinfulness and how much I deserved Hell and how much I needed the salvation that Christ provided through His death and resurrection. And then Greg Laurie said something that I never heard, or if I heard it, I definitely never understood it. But he said, "Salvation is a free gift of God's grace. You can know today that you're saved." Because my whole life growing up, I tried to get my good to outweigh my bad. I tried to earn my own salvation. So when I heard salvation was a free gift, that God was truly willing to wipe away all the wicked sins that I'd ever committed and give me everlasting life. I remember the invitation was given and I just jumped up and ran forward.

And remember standing there with tears streaming down my face. As I envisioned Christ hanging there on that cross, that crucifix that I saw in church week after week that meant nothing to me, suddenly made sense. And I understood that He bore my sins, that He was my substitute, that He was there to give me His righteousness. And I cried out in repentance and faith. And I tell you, Dr. Dobson and Dr. Meeker, I was instantly transformed into a new creation.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh my goodness. And guess what? I mentioned in the last program about Louis Zamparini and how rebellious he was. He walked the same path you did. And yet he went to a Billy Graham crusade and walked out of it and yet came back and gave his heart to the Lord. The parallels between your two lives is really quite remarkable.

Emeal Zwayne: Yeah. And it all traces its root back to that cross. That blood that was shed so long ago, so far away, still trickling through the ages, healing, touching, saving. And so that's what God did that night. And I remember I was so transformed. I remember standing there, I felt as light as a feather. It was as if though I was carrying a thousand pounds of weight on my shoulders all my life and God just lifted it up and threw it away. And I was so changed. I mean, we get in my friend's car and he turns on the same wicked radio station we used to listen to. And I turned him and I said, "What are you doing? We're Christians. We don't listen to that anymore." And he's like, "Whoa, slow down." And so I remember we get home and remember my mom and I got in a fight before we left.

So I'm heading in towards the house and come to find later my mom had found out things I'd been involved in and she had had it. She told my dad and my brother, "I'm done with him. He's out of here." And they convinced her to kind of wait and sort of monitor me before saying...

Dr. James Dobson: Were you ever on drugs?

Emeal Zwayne: I had tampered with marijuana, but that maybe five, six times, but that was the extent of it. But I used to drink a lot. So I got in alcohol and immorality. And so I remember I'm walking in through the door and my mom wasn't supposed to say anything, but you know moms, they can't hold anything in.

Dr. Meg Meeker: No. Un uh.

Emeal Zwayne: So I see her through the window there by the front door. And the second she saw me, her arms went up like that and the, "I'm going to get you mom posture." And I walk in through the door and here I was. And I had this Holy Spirit grin from ear to ear and I'm like, "Hi, mom." She goes, "Hi, huh? You've been doing this, haven't you?" I said, "Yes, mom." And she nearly fell over because I'd never confessed anything to her. So this was like, "What? Am I hearing right?" So I said, "Mom, not just that, but a whole lot more. Let's talk." And we sat down that night and I shared with her everything I had been involved in from A to Z.

Dr. Meg Meeker: Wow.

Emeal Zwayne: I said, "Mom, I want you to mark these words." I said, "From this night forward, nothing will ever be the same." And my mom passed away May 22nd of 94. This was August 15th of 91, but until the day that she passed away, she never forgot those words because God allowed her to see the transformation of my life. She told me she used to lock her bedroom door at night because she was afraid I would kill her one day.

Dr. Meg Meeker: Oh, wow.

Emeal Zwayne: That's how intense I was becoming.

Dr. Meg Meeker: So EZ, what happened to your anger after that? Where did it go?

Emeal Zwayne: Honestly, it disappeared.

Dr. Meg Meeker: Or were you still angry?

Emeal Zwayne: No.

Dr. Meg Meeker: And just dealt with it. So it really just went away. It was stripped away.

Emeal Zwayne: It says in 2 Corinthians five, "If any man is in Christ, he's a new creation, the old things have passed away, all things have become new." I know some people do continue to struggle with issues even after they're saved that there are things that hang on there. And there were certain things in my life that I continued to struggle with. But as far as the anger went, the bitterness, the resentment, the

hostility, it was gone. And I love what Scripture says too, that “when a man's ways are pleasing to the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.”

Dr. James Dobson: Peace with him.

Emeal Zwayne: And even those that hated me, even those that I hated, suddenly I was making peace with, I was apologizing to, I was making amends with, and I was just a new creation. God revolutionized me.

Dr. James Dobson: EZ, I have a request for you today. I want you to talk to the kid that's out there, the young person that's out there, happened to be listening and he's where you were. He's as bitter and as angry as you and you encountered Jesus Christ and He did something remarkable in your life. Talk to that young person and talk to his parents.

Emeal Zwayne: Absolutely. Well, I would say first of all, to never, ever, ever give up hope. I was like that Demonic that it says, “and the word could not be tamed, but there was a day that he met Jesus.” There was a day when the son of God stood still to acknowledge this man who was hopeless and who was helpless. And my message to you would be to recognize the futility of life. James tells us that life is as a vapor. It's here one moment, it's gone the next. I said earlier, my father's 105 years old. I remember one day walking down the hallway at home and hearing crying coming from his room. And I walked in, I said, “Dad, what's the matter?” And I saw him standing there, staring at pictures of his mom and dad that my sister had just printed up for him and he was crying like a baby and he said, “My mom, my dad.” Dad passed away maybe 50 years before that. But to him, it's as if though it were yesterday. And I know that anyone who gets further along in life always looks back and says, “Man, life is quick. Life is quick.” And my encouragement to you would be to recognize that there is hope at the foot of that bloodstain cross, but you have to recognize that you have a problem, you have a sin problem and your sin has created a divide between you and God.

Dr. James Dobson: Let me role play with you.

Emeal Zwayne: Sure.

Dr. James Dobson: Okay. EZ, you don't understand me. You don't know where I've been. I've done horrible things. Maybe I've even killed people. I don't even know. I've shot at them. I am one wicked man and God couldn't do for me what He did for you.

Emeal Zwayne: Well, it's great to know that God transformed others who were far worse than both you and me. In fact, in the Bible, we see the example of the life of the apostle Paul. He called himself the chief of sinners. That means the worst of the worst. Paul, the apostle was one who gave his consent when Christians were being put to death. He would hunt them down like animals. And not only did God take a hold of him and change him and transform him, but he became an

apostle. He wrote the majority of the books and the pages of the New Testament. And so there is hope for you. That's why Christ came. He came to seek and save the lost. He came to give his life for sinners because he was that substitute. To get into Heaven, we have to have perfect righteousness and we don't.

We're wearing robes that say sin all over them. Christ, when He came, was wearing a robe that said perfect. He took that robe off, laid it aside. He took on himself the robes of sinners like you and me that say sin all over them, went to the cross and bore the just wrath of God that we deserved. So that if we repent and believe in His death and resurrection on our behalf, He'll take that robe that Jesus was wearing that said perfect and He'll put it on us. And we can now go to Heaven because of the righteousness of Christ. But first, you have to recognize your sinfulness. You can't pretend you're a good person. You can't pretend that you're okay with God. As I shared earlier, one lie makes you a liar. One thing stolen makes you a thief. If you've used God's name in vain, the name above all names, the Bible calls that blasphemy and God will not hold you guiltless if you've done that.

So you deserve His wrath. You deserve his judgment. That's the truth. But we see His abundant love when we recognize that even though that's what we deserved, He gave us what was undeserved, His son as the sacrifice on our behalf.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, that sounds so good to me, but I feel like I've got to go out there and atone for those things that I did. I have to make restitutions. I have to pay back the people I've stolen from. I have to do all these things and that's going to take me a year or two to even deal with them.

Emeal Zwayne: Well, imagine if you had committed some serious crimes and then you stood in front of a judge and you said to the judge, "Judge, I know I committed these heinous crimes, but I'm going to atone for those crimes by beginning to wash your car and mow your lawn and do your housework. That's what I'm going to do to atone for my sins." You can't do that. It's impossible. When you commit a crime, justice has to be served. That judge can't look at you and say, "Okay, that'll do it. " But if someone steps in and pays the fine that you deserved, then you can go free. And the Bible says, "By grace, you've been saved through faith though and out of yourselves. It's a gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast. No amount of good that we could do will ever erase the bad we've done, but God in His grace sent His son to be the propitiation, the sacrifice, the substitute for our sins so that through that and that alone, we can have forgiveness.

Dr. James Dobson: So there's no way you can earn it.

Emeal Zwayne: No.

Dr. James Dobson: When you say it's a gift, it's free, you mean that?

Emeal Zwayne: Absolutely. Completely, absolutely. 100% free.

Dr. James Dobson: A person could have an encounter with Jesus Christ right now?

Emeal Zwayne: Right now. When you cry out to God in repentance and faith, you believe that Jesus Christ is Lord, that God raised him from the dead. You look unto Christ on that cross as the only hope for your salvation.

Roger Marsh: You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and what a story we've been hearing from EZ Zwayne, a life pulled out of gang violence and rebellion and made completely new in Jesus Christ. Well, that same grace that EZ found is a thread that runs through so many lives, including former co-host Dr. Meg Meeker. As we continue now, Dr. Meeker is going to share her own testimony of how she came to know Jesus Christ. So let's rejoin that conversation right now on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Dr. Meeker, tell me your story. I've heard it before, but how did you come to know Christ?

Dr. Meg Meeker: Oh, it's really fun. When Walt and I were finishing medical school and we had one child, we decided that we didn't want to both be residents together. So he decided to stay home and take care of our daughter while I did my training because he said, "If you stop now, you won't go back. But if I stop, I know I'll go back." So we ended up...I filled out what we call the match when you want to know what hospital you're going to work in. And I had my first top choices were Boston. I was from Boston. And then the other five were from Ohio because I knew Walt wanted to be in Ohio. And this is true. This is a true story. I went to the mailbox with the letter in my hand ready to put it in the mailbox and I opened it up and I scratched out Boston Children's over the top and I put Children's Hospital of Wisconsin.

And I thought, "This is crazy. Why am I doing it?" Well, long story short, we ended up there and shortly after we ended there in Milwaukee, our realtor who sold us our home invited us to Stewart and Jill Briscoe's church. And we sat down in that church and I had never heard anybody talk that way. I had never heard ...

Dr. James Dobson: You'd never heard the gospel?

Dr. Meg Meeker: Like I said, I maybe had heard it, but it never registered at all. So really that was it. We just, both of us fell hook, line, and sinker and we just started reading scripture and Walt started going to Bible-studies and I couldn't because I was a resident, but that's really how it happened. And then we just started studying and studying and studying. So we had sort of a long transition, but I'll never

forget, I feel like God sort of picked us up by the scruff in the neck and said, "I'm kind of done with you two. You're stubborn, you're hardheaded."

We'd fought. I wanted to go to Boston. He wanted Ohio and God said, "You're not going to either of those places. Boom, here you go." And it was one of the biggest blessings that we ended up there. And we just never looked back and it just...

Dr. James Dobson: Doesn't it amaze you even today that before you were a sinner, God wanted you. He cared for you. He knew you. He knew you before the foundations of the earth, He knew Meg Meeker. Your name wasn't Meeker then, but He knew your maiden name.

Dr. Meg Meeker: He did. And I remember the Holy Spirit wooing me. I remember as a teenager seeing a Billy Graham on the television and going, "Wow, what's going on there? That is so neat. What is that all about? " But I was in New England. New England's a hard place to evangelize. There weren't many evangelists in our neighborhood. It was Boston. And so I think moving to the Midwest and hearing that, but you're absolutely right. But as I looked back over those years, I can see the Holy Spirit sort of moving in my heart, wooing me and wooing me. And boy, when I fell in love, I just fell in love. That was it.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, let me ask you the same question that I asked EZ. What would you say to the young person out there who's never heard this message? And there's something about what the two of you said today that is appealing, attractive, and yet they don't know what to do next.

Dr. Meg Meeker: Right. Well, I would say to that person, you know in the deepest part of who you are, that what we're saying is right and it's true. And there's another pull in you saying, "Ah, but I don't understand. I don't understand." It's okay. You don't need to understand, but respond to what you deeply know is right and true. And that is God calling you to Himself. So what I would encourage you to do is find your way to the nearest church that you can or a Bible study or to go talk to a pastor and don't be afraid. Go ask somebody who is in a Bible study, maybe one of your friends goes. Ask if you could go with them, but don't be afraid and open your heart and God will lead you where you need to go to come in a close relationship with Him. And I guarantee your life will never be the same.

Dr. James Dobson: EZ, is that what drives you today?

Emeal Zwayne: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: What she just said and spreading-that word to others.

Emeal Zwayne: Absolutely. And that's why it's such a delight. Look at what God has done, how He brings things full circle. I was slated for abortion and I'm now the executive producer of probably one of the most successful pro-life films made, our 180

film. You've spoken with Ray Comfort about that. I was radically transformed by the gospel and now the president of Living Waters, a ministry whose whole focus is the gospel. I'm a living miracle. And to me, there's no greater joy than to be a part of watching God continue that miracle in the lives of other people. To watch young people come to Christ especially as a delight beyond description.

Dr. James Dobson: Are you a father?

Emeal Zwayne: I am. I'm a father of five.

Dr. James Dobson: Five.

Emeal Zwayne: Believe it or not. I have three daughters and two sons, three beautiful delicate rose petals and two prickly thorns.

Dr. James Dobson: Is it your great passion to help them come to know Christ? They probably already have, but to grow in that understanding.

Emeal Zwayne: Absolutely. As the apostle John said in 3 John, I have no greater joy than this than to see my children walk in truth. He was speaking of his spiritual children, but to now have both physical and spiritual children walking with Christ, it's such a delight to see my daughters who are now older. They go out evangelizing with us. They share the gospel. My daughter's in college, my oldest Julia, she's sharing Christ with her schoolmates and in her public speech class, she's sharing the gospel in her speeches. And it's such a joy, such a delight. And often I look and I say, "Lord, I should be dead or in prison and look at what you've done." And years ago I summed up my life in this little verse. "I once was but a lump of coal upon a heap of mire, yet Jesus Christ redeemed my soul and saved me from the fire."

Dr. Meg Meeker: So beautiful.

Emeal Zwayne: That's my life in a nutshell, Doctor.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, it's been a real pleasure for Dr. Meeker and me-to have you as our guest. I've been inspired by what you had to say. I thank God for that dinner that we had together a year ago. Absolutely. I had already met you, but didn't really know your background until today. And it's just really an honor to be able to share your story with all those people out there that are listening. They're those that aren't so young, who still have not ever had an encounter with Christ. And if we can reach one of them, then it's worth the entire history of this broadcast.

Emeal Zwayne: Amen. Amen.

Dr. James Dobson: Thank you.

Emeal Zwayne: Now, before you go, we've got just time for you to talk about Living Waters-

Emeal Zwayne: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: ... and what you're doing and why.

Emeal Zwayne: Yeah. Living Waters is a ministry that exists to inspire and equip Christians and fulfilling the great commission. That's our vision. We want to come alongside the church, come alongside believers and help them and being the ambassadors for Christ that they were called to be. And so we have training courses and evangelism. We have gospel tracks that people are able to give out. We have different movies, our 180 movie on abortion, our evolution versus God movie. We have one called *Audacity* that deals with the sensitive issue of homosexuality. And we're working on new things all the time. So I want to encourage people to go to livingwaters.com. And connect with me. I love to come out and speak at churches and at different events, which I get to do all around the world and different parts of the country. And don't forget biblebee.org as well, where you can get your young folks involved in the Bible Bee as well.

Dr. James Dobson: Dr. Meeker, being a physician in private practice, you see a lot of lost young people, don't you?

Dr. Meg Meeker: I do. And I get discouraged, honestly and truly. You get sort of downcast because you think, well, there's certain things that you can't talk about or very, very sensitive. We have a Christian practice too, and I pray with our patients and so does my husband, but you do. You sort of feel like the world is gobbling our kids up. Our whole culture is just so hyper sexualized, everything about our children. So this gives me a lot of encouragement.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you two are my sister and my brother, and it's a pleasure to work with you.

Emeal Zwayne: Thank you both-for having me. It was truly an honor.

Roger Marsh: Well, what a powerful reminder that God can use one person to change the direction of another person's life. You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, and we featured Dr. Dobson's conversation with Emeal E. Z. Zwayne, along with former Family Talk co-host Meg Meeker. Now, if you'd like to hear today's program again, or if you'd like to share it with a friend, you can do so when you visit us online at drjamesdobson.org. If it's easier, just type in jdfi.org. They are one in the same. Here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we are committed to preserving and promoting the institution of the family and the biblical principles upon which it is based. Whether it's strengthening marriages or encouraging parents or pointing the next generation to Jesus Christ, that mission is only possible because of friends like you. So today, we invite you to partner with us. Your gift of any amount helps us keep broadcasting biblical truth and reaching families all across America. You can

reach us through the U.S. Postal Service. Our ministry mailing address is the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code 80949. You can also reach us through our secure website at jdfi.org. Or if you prefer, speak with a member of our constituent care team. That number to call 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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