



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Destiny of Our Youth

Guest(s): Steve Fitzhugh

Air Date: April 14, 2025

Dr. James Dobson: Hello everyone you're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and thank you for joining us for this program.

Steve Fitzhugh: Mom did the best she could, struggling down here in the hood. I'm steady hating that deadbeat dad. Disappointment's all I had. I got to face the dreadful fact, my daddy's never coming back. Now I got to be a man all on my own. Yet they don't want me acting grown. If the truth is what you preach, won't you help this brother reach his destiny.

Roger Marsh: Well welcome to Family Talk, the listener-supported broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh and today we're diving into the challenges facing inner-city youth and one man's inspiring mission to transform lives through faith and mentorship. Our special guest on the broadcast is Steve Fitzhugh who understands these struggles personally. Steve grew up in a broken home and he discovered God's purpose for his life at a young age. This faith propelled him to become a top collegiate athlete, receiving a full scholarship to Miami University of Ohio where he captained both the track and football teams. He later played for the Denver Broncos until he was sidelined by a shoulder injury. Steve Fitzhugh's journey led him to earn a master of divinity degree and to develop addiction recovery programs for Native American youth. In Washington, D.C., he transformed three former crack houses into what is now known as The House DC, a safe-haven where at-risk kids can discover their potential and purpose.

Through his ministry called PowerMoves, Steve Fitzhugh now travels nationwide inspiring young people to reach their God-given potential. The reality Steve addresses is heartbreaking. Widespread fatherlessness has led many children to seek belonging in gangs and try to find escape through drugs. And yet, Steve's message offers profound hope to those in seemingly hopeless situations. So let's listen now to this classic conversation featuring Steve Fitzhugh and our own Dr. James Dobson on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Welcome, Steve. I'm really glad to have you here. I have heard many good things about you and the work that you're doing. You have a compelling story to tell from your own life and your own childhood. Why don't we start by your

describing as best as possible? You have to experience something to fully understand it, but describing what inner city kids deal with every day.

Steve Fitzhugh: Well, I think a good way to begin is just by making a reference to something that I saw in one of the schools that I work with there in Washington, D.C. I was walking through the halls of Anacostia High School, and I saw so many symbols of affiliation on the walls, 17th and Q, where I'm from. Something dawned upon me that there are so many students who are crying out for some kind of identity, wanting to belong. Sometimes a student in the inner city just feels like they're just passing through for a short time. There was a story once about young ladies who were describing what they wanted their funeral to be like, what kind of dress they wanted to wear and the music they wanted to play. They were only 10 years old and 11 years old, students who don't believe that, in many instances, that they're going to live past 25.

Dr. James Dobson: Where you work may be one of the most difficult areas of Washington, D.C. In fact, the street that you work on is called murder row?

Steve Fitzhugh: Well, that was something that some of the police officers named the community, that street.

Dr. James Dobson: Because there have been so many killings there.

Steve Fitzhugh: Well, in the heyday of the crack use and drug sales and illegal pharmaceuticals.

Dr. James Dobson: I'm told... I was down there just a month ago or so, but they said that you see these little teddy bears-

Steve Fitzhugh: Correct.

Dr. James Dobson: ... in trees and on posts and in places around the area, and every one of those represents a place where somebody's been shot.

Steve Fitzhugh: It is not uncommon to, not necessarily where someone has been shot, but to see a place where a student has lost his or her life. People commemorate that by leaving teddy bears or stuffed animals at that site. You can drive through the community, and two blocks from our youth center there's two spots where students and other people have left teddy bears. They tie them to a pole or to a fence, just to commemorate that that was a spot where they lost a loved one.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that an atmosphere of hopelessness for many of these kids?

Steve Fitzhugh: Well, you know, I would say that the hopelessness results more from the lack of their exposure to a world beyond three or four square blocks. If that's all you've seen, that's all you've experienced, a lot of times, why should I even hope for something greater than this? I think one of the things we try to do is just broaden their horizons, give them a sense of, yes, there is possibility out there.

But I've taken students through the city. I've had a student one time on my way out to northern Virginia, had a student say, "You know, I didn't know all this was here." He was talking about the Lincoln Memorial. I said, "You've never seen this before?" He said, "No." I said, "Where are you from, man?" He said, "I'm from here in D.C." Here, he had grown up not too far from Capitol Hill, and he said he only saw the Lincoln Memorial when it was on television.

Limited exposure, and at the same time, we want to begin to broaden their horizons, cultivate new relationships. Yeah, I call it almost a sense of soullessness. I see students who don't care, but by the same token, I see a number of students who, if they had some of the tools that they needed to be more functional in community and society, they would certainly gravitate towards those things. We're seeing a dichotomy of some students who have been so enamored with the pain, the hurt, the disappointment, people coming in and out of their lives, lack of support. But students who, if they had an opportunity to be motivated, moved, and encouraged, they would make a different life for themselves.

Dr. James Dobson: The central feature of the people who live in that area is the fractured family. I mean, that's an overstatement, but for the most part, they're very few.

Steve Fitzhugh: There are some very conscientious parents, but they are fewer than I would say, than most of the circumstances in that particular community, which happens to be one of the more depressed in the area. But I guess I could sum it up by just pointing to an exercise I did with a number of students. I took them to a campsite. Once they got to the campsite, I do something called miracle at midnight. I tell them at midnight, we're going to look into the face of God. We get them out in the middle of nowhere and we take them up near this mountain and I have them lock arms.

The miracle of midnight is when they close their eyes, tilt their head back and look up into the sky. When they open their eyes, it takes them away. I say, "We're looking into the face of God." Then at that time I try to take them a little step closer by asking them two questions. One, what was the lowest point of your life? I had about 10 young men from the inner city who went around one by one. I began by saying what the lowest point of my life was. But as they began to reveal what the lowest point of their lives were, I was blown away by the severe case of inadequate fathering these young men have had.

Dr. James Dobson: The primary problem that all kids have, but black kids especially deal with, is the absentee father. 70% of black babies are born out of wedlock. That leaves 30%, and half of those lose their fathers to divorce or abandonment. Of the 15% that's left, how many of them are really dedicated, involved, caring fathers? I mean, dads are just absent. They're just gone. Boys especially do not do well under those circumstance.

Steve Fitzhugh: No, they don't. I have several colleagues that, I've been to their homes and out in the suburbs. I remarked to a dear friend of mine after having breakfast with

he and his mother and father one day before a day of school assemblies, I said, "I'm a little green today, Dan." He said, "Why?" "I don't ever remember having breakfast with my mother and father. I don't remember going on vacation with my parents. That never happened for me." For so many students, vacation? That doesn't happen. Or sitting down at a family meal with everyone? That doesn't happen for a lot of students.

Dr. James Dobson: You've been there.

Steve Fitzhugh: I've been there.

Dr. James Dobson: This is not theoretical for you, Steve. You experienced it. You were almost aborted, as I understand it.

Steve Fitzhugh: I praise God that God in His sovereignty revealed His divine intention for me. But my mom kind of forced a thought on me as she was on her death bed. I kind of tried to repress it. Mom just relaxed. She was dying of cancer and she said, "Well, I want you to know something, Stevie." I said, "What's that?" She said, "Well, as you know, your dad and I weren't getting along. It looked like I was going to raise three kids by myself. But somewhere in the making up and breaking up, I got pregnant." She then told me that she didn't think she should go through with it, not bring another baby along and raise that all by herself.

She said she woke up in the middle of the night, something told her, "By faith, keep this baby." She said, "That's why I always wanted you to name your first daughter Faith." I never understood that, and I didn't name my daughter Faith. But she always said, "I want you to name your daughter Faith, because someone told me to keep this baby." I tell students all the time, "That's why as a former fetus, I oppose abortion." Because although I was not my mom's intention, may not have been my dad's intention, I was God's intention.

Dr. James Dobson: So you were raised by a single mother.

Steve Fitzhugh: I was raised by a single mother. My parents divorced when I was approximately six or seven years old.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you ever have a good relationship with your dad?

Steve Fitzhugh: He lived on the other side of town. He was there, but I didn't have the father time.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you feel rejected by him?

Steve Fitzhugh: I don't feel rejected by him.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you then?

Steve Fitzhugh: Not necessarily then. My mom always told me, "Your dad loves you in his own way." But this is what I understood, was that a lot of people have problems, and the dysfunction comes when we don't have the necessary tools to handle our problems. I'm not certain my dad really knew when I came along, exactly the tools or the ways in which he could best be a father for me. It was a difficult situation. He remarried right away. Even today as a father and a husband, my wife is training me in how to be the best husband I can be. I have a greater conscientious now about family time. For a while it was just good for me to be there and be home. But my wife saying, "Well, I'd like to go for a walk." Well, I never saw that.

Dr. James Dobson: You'd never seen that modeled, though.

Steve Fitzhugh: I never saw that modeled.

Dr. James Dobson: Never knew how a family's supposed to function. How far out did you get? Did you ever get on drugs?

Steve Fitzhugh: I never got on drugs. I would say one of the things that happened in my life that turned me around was that at age of 12, my sister dated a guy and he became a believer. He went off to the seminary, in fact, and he's a prominent pastor today in Chicago. But they broke up and she continued to go to church. One day she asked her baby brother to go with her.

Dr. James Dobson: You.

Steve Fitzhugh: That was me. I went to church and just fell in love with the fact that God had a plan for my life. Although she stopped going, I called the church office to come pick me up every Sunday.

Dr. James Dobson: So you went by yourself.

Steve Fitzhugh: Every Sunday.

Dr. James Dobson: No one took you.

Steve Fitzhugh: Sunday school and church, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18.

Dr. Dobson: What did you find there that you were looking for?

Steve Fitzhugh: Well, I found out that God had a plan for my life, and that because He had a plan for my life, a strategy for my life, that my reality, a lot of the pain and a lot of the alcoholism and a lot of the forfeited opportunities that I saw, did not have to become my destiny. When I got to church and found out that God had a plan for my life, and there were people doing life the way it was supposed to be done, that excited me.

Dr. James Dobson: Why don't we give credit where credit's due? Can you remember any of the names of those people who reached out to you-

Steve Fitzhugh: Oh, yes.

Dr. James Dobson: ... in those days? Who drove that bus? Who was your pastor? I mean, our listeners aren't going to know who they are, but they deserve a commendation, don't they?

Steve Fitzhugh: Well, Brother Adams picked me up in that bus every Sunday morning at 9:00 AM and I got a chance to go to Sunday School. Then the pastor, Ron Fowler, introduced me to Jesus Christ at 12 years old. He told me Jesus was 12 when he started his ministry. Mr. And Mrs. Snowden were the sixth grade Sunday school teachers-

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, I love it.

Steve Fitzhugh: ... who put that little Sunday School book in front of me and I read it for the first time. Then when I was in church by myself and they would say, "Well, sit with someone in your family, because this is a family moment," I didn't have anyone to go to. But there's a lady named Barbara Slack, who is today Barbara Sanders. She was a single woman there in the church. I remember going to her and saying, "Can I sit with you?" And I did. She was my family for those moments. I'll never forget those times, those people.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, my wife Shirley has been a little different route, but in many ways, rather similar. Her mother knew that she was going to need help in raising two kids as a single mom, and she sent Shirley and her brother to a little evangelical church in the neighborhood. She found the Lord as a very young child, about the same time that you did. She still speaks of Mrs. Baldwin, her Sunday School teacher, and Reverend Pinner. I don't know these people, but I know the role they played in her life. I would like to say to those who are listening to us right now, there are kids like this in your neighborhood. I mean, they're out there. I don't care whether you live in the inner city or in the suburbs. There are kids out there who don't know who they are, and they certainly don't know Jesus Christ. They're just waiting for somebody to show them a better way. You caught it.

Steve Fitzhugh: Yeah. But I just realized that had not Ron Fowler loved on me and had not Geneva Curry prayed with me at the altar, had not these folks not moved on my behalf, where would I be? But by the grace of God, when I turn on the television and see that young man just handcuffed and hiding from the cameras, if it were not for the grace of God, that could be Steve Fitzhugh.

Dr. James Dobson: Are you discouraged? Is there enough progress in there to feel like you're getting something done for the Lord?

Steve Fitzhugh: The progress is remarkably encouraging. However, we do have episodes and casualties, and that can be disheartening. Just last fall we lost a student. He was a guy who was a sharp kid. But to lose Mike was difficult, because I really ... He was one of those kids, I said, "God, you're going to have to change this guy." We were on a track. We were on a path to change Mike. He was brutally murdered. He had contributed to our process. He had contributed in song in one of our CDs.

Dr. James Dobson: A rap song?

Steve Fitzhugh: A rap song.

Dr. James Dobson: Can you quote it?

Steve Fitzhugh: Well, I can't quote the song, but in response to that song, I have a song that I wrote that I think was pretty appropriate, that gives people an idea of who he is. His song-

Dr. James Dobson: Why don't you give us a piece of it?

Steve Fitzhugh: Sure. I'll share a little with you about Mike. He came into the studio and he was a very angry guy. He was full of a lot of bitterness. He began to say some things on the studio microphone that ... I said, "Mike, we can't do that. Mike, we don't roll like that in here." He came back with a song he had written that was the most incredible piece of work I've heard anyone do. It didn't have any cursing in it. It was clean. But it was the epitome of what it's like to be a disenfranchised, disheartened student in Southeast D.C. In response to that, God laid something on my heart called destiny. I asked, "What would Mike say if he stood in front of my church one Sunday?"

Mike would probably say this, "I can't hardly see the light of day because misery stays in my way. Still I dream to be free like them boys on my TV, but every day is just the same. I've got nothing but pain on top of pain. I can't escape this hopeless dream. Open my mouth, but cannot scream. So here I am, me and my crew, not knowing what we ought to do. The streets our only road. No other life to us was told. Poverty ain't nothing new. That's all I knew since I was two. Moms did the best she could, struggling down here in the hood. I'm steady hating that dead beat dad. Disappointment's all I had. I got to face the dreadful fact, my daddy's never coming back. Now I got to be a man all on my own, yet they don't want me acting grown.

Street soldiers popping that Glock, youngins keep dying upon my block. I'm scared to close my eyes tonight, because I'm feeling like something just ain't right. Still I'm trying to speak my heart. Too bad your fear keeps us apart. I can't believe it til I hear it. I can't hear it til you tell it. If the truth is what you preach, won't you help this brother reach his destiny? And I reminisce about all these scars. It's like I'm in prison and they're my bars. I'm locked away from the joys of

life. Am I destined for streets and strife? Am I ever going to win a wife, ever going to have a pain-free life, ever going to travel around the world? Would I get another chance to reach my girl? Will I ever sleep without this hunger?

It makes me wonder. It makes me wonder why I live in so much pain. Will I lose my mind? Will I go insane? And when I hear the final bell, will it be Heaven or will it be Hell? Will I die while I'm in my prime? Can I ever renew my mind? Is there a God that can forgive all the wickedness I did? I can't forgive my thugish self, got too much pride to cry for help. Facts too hard for me to admit. If it don't fit, you must acquit. But if my record were true and right, I ought to be serving double life. They should have thrown away the jailhouse key for the sins locked up inside of me.

No solution for my drama. I'm too old to run to momma. I want to change. How do I pray it? How many times do I got to say it? You've got sight. Why can't you see it? Without you, will I ever achieve it? What? My destiny. Still I choose to go on. I've got to survive. I got to stay strong. How many times I said, "That's it"? How many times I wanted to quit, like when shorty broke my heart. I was true blue right from the start. "Why me?" I had to plead. Gave love a chance, and still I bleed. Regret I wasted time. True that all the blame was mine. They'd tell me the day's another day. They'd tell me it's not too late to change. They say I can still redeem my life. They say there's a way to walk upright.

But when I close my eyes real tight, I'm still seeing demons in the night. I'm ready to pay about any price just to get a little peace back in my life, like the time when we was young, me and my homies just having fun. Sometimes I want to go way back when. Sometimes I want to up start again. No more thug life under them streetlights, no more sadness, no more sin. I wish you could help me find my way, because I'm living in fear of judgment day. Even a clock's my enemy, because everybody died and look just like me. It's like my grip is about to slip. It's like I'm down to my last clip. I'm dodging shadows, but they was mine. Don't let me die before I find my destiny."

I got back from Seattle after I performed that for the first time and I checked my messages on my cell phone. My intern left a message and said, "Steve, they found Mike's body on Monday."

Dr. James Dobson: What happened to him?

Steve Fitzhugh: It was three days short of his 19th birthday. He was hanging out with some guys in a stolen rental car. They ran into some other guys who were looking for him. Everybody ran. Mike fell. He caught one bullet. They caught up to him and they gave him several more. They put him back in the car, drove him over to the street that our youth center's on, drug him out, laid him up against a telephone pole and we found him later that weekend.

Dr. James Dobson: That broke your heart, didn't it? And that broken heart is expressed in that rap music.

Steve Fitzhugh: Well, when I recite that, it's almost as if I hear Mike screaming it. But not just Mike, all the Mikes that we drive by every day who bump into people who are full of the Holy Spirit, but somehow instead of being the salt of the earth, they're silent. I wonder if Mike prayed that prayer, because he didn't pray it with me. Did he have time to say, "Dear Jesus, accept me?" I don't know if he did.

Dr. James Dobson: Steve, we've got a couple minutes left. How can we pray for you and the work that you're doing?

Steve Fitzhugh: I think the only way we can be successful at what we do is if we have God's guidance, if we're led by the Spirit of God. We really need team members who are led by the Spirit of God who can join as one body and one spirit and one mind, and whatever they can bring, their resources, their direction, their assistance, and help us create a moment for life change so God can change any life in a moment. As I travel around the country and look into the faces of all these young people in inner cities and suburbs, if you could just pray that somehow the words that I say and the life that I've lived would make an impact in the lives of some of these students and they in turn will go out and make a difference in their community and in their schools and their hallways.

Dr. James Dobson: You speak all around the country to adults and kids.

Steve Fitzhugh: I speak to adults, kids. I have a very exciting workshop I do with the parents called ... I spoke to your kids today, this is what they told me. Here's a snapshot of that presentation. I speak to kids in juvenile institutions and pro athletes and college athletes.

Dr. James Dobson: I just trust that the Lord will continue to bless the work that you're doing. I'd like to know more about it. I really appreciate your coming to be with us today.

Steve Fitzhugh: Thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: It's a desperately needed work. I just ask that the Lord would be with you. I know you already is, but I join the hearts of many people across the country who will be praying for you.

Steve Fitzhugh: Thank you. It was a pleasure being here.

Roger Marsh: Steve Fitzhugh's story reminds us that every life has value and one moment of compassion can literally save a person's destiny. With each Mike we encounter, we have a chance to be the light that helps someone find hope beyond their current circumstances. You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and Dr. Dobson's guest today, Steve Fitzhugh, the founder of PowerMoves, a

Christian ministry based in Washington, DC. If you'd like to learn more about Steve's ministry, or to share this broadcast with a friend, simply go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. Or you can also access this audio on the Family Talk app.

Well Easter is fast approaching. As a matter of fact it's coming up this Sunday. And we want to offer you a free resource to help you share the profound message of God's profound love and forgiveness with the little ones in your life. This resource is called "Sharing Jesus with Your Children." As a grandpa, I can say this is also a great resource for your grandchildren as well. From teaching them to pray to helping them understand God's grace, this resource is designed to help equip parents with simple, meaningful ways to nurture their children's spiritual growth. Now you can download this free PDF when you go to drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. Download this resource today and begin creating lasting spiritual memories with your family this Easter season.

You know your partnership here with Family Talk makes a tremendous difference in homes all across the country. In a culture where children are growing up in broken homes, your support enables us to continue to equip parents and to help their children grow in faith. Please partner with us today. Your gift, no matter the size, helps us reach families with messages of hope and practical wisdom for today's challenges. You can make a secure donation online when you go to drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. You can also call us at 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825.

And if you prefer to send your tax-deductible donation through the U.S. Postal Service, our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk P.O. Box 39000 Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code, 80949. Again that's P.O. Box 39000 Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code, 80949.

Well I'm Roger Marsh and on behalf of Dr. Dobson and all of us here at the JDFI, thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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