



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: An Everyday Hero with a Passion for the Wonder of God's Creation – Part 2

Guest(s): David Rives

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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 back to another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love. I'm Roger Marsh, and our guest today, continuing conversation with David Rives, the founder of the Wonders Center and Science Museum, author of a number of books on helping us understand the bridge between science and faith. We've got a link for davidrivesministries.org and wondercenter.org up at jdfi.org. David Rives, welcome back to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

David Rives: Thanks for having me, Roger.

Roger Marsh: You recently just had a conference that was packed out, your first ever. Talk about who was there and who you were actually putting it on for. I would imagine there were a lot of kids, maybe some homeschool kids whose family said, we are going to this thing.

David Rives: Yeah, we have kids' days, homeschool days, family days, adult conferences as well. But we just had our first massive three-day conference. It was a science conference, but we had kids' activities and sessions. Museum admission was included with the conference. We have days where we'll have live animals all throughout the museum where everyone can interact with them. We just had another event where we opened up the Wonders of the Sea, an aquarium in the lower levels of the Wonders Center and Science Museum. And people not just from the Nashville, Tennessee area, I'm talking about states and states away flock in to participate in this. We have people from California and North Dakota and Florida and Texas and New York, all over the country and all over the world coming in to experience what has become an incredible attraction. Something where you can go to Disney or you can go to Six Flags or you can go to some of these other places and you can have a lot of fun. But if you want to be inspired in your faith and have fun, the Wonder Center is the largest science museum in the world from a Christian perspective, from a biblical perspective, at over 100,000 square feet with kids' hands-on activities. You can dig for dinosaurs in the sand pit. You can sit back in a full dome, 60 foot, with almost 8K resolution, reclining back, 25 drivers, 25 speakers behind a perforated metal dome, and you were fully immersed in space, flying past galaxies and planets. And not only,

because you can see planetariums, let's just say, you know, in Chicago, you can see planetariums maybe in your hometown. You can see planetariums in L.A. and you'll walk away saying, wow, space is cool. But what you're also going to walk away with is this paradigm that space is cool. Space is where I came from. I'm just a piece of a star and I have no purpose in life, right? Because that's the atheistic spin that is pushed in nearly every planetarium on planet earth. Out of over 4,300 planetariums based on size and technology we rank top 10 in the world right here in Dixon, Tennessee at the Wonders Center and Science Museum and at the top 10 planetarium in the world you not only walk away saying whoa space is cool, but you walk away saying and God is awesome. You know there was a cowboy poet by the name of Stuart Hamlin. I know his grandson, but Stuart wrote many, many famous gospel and country gospel songs. And one of the lines in one of his songs resonates with me very deeply. He says that God is big enough to rule His mighty universe and yet small enough to live within my heart. That's how big of a God we serve. And that's what we want people to walk away with, that wow, my faith is not a blind faith. The evidence is all around in nature, in God's creation. And Roger, you know, science is looked at as mystical or maybe science is looked at as too complex for us to understand. But science comes from the word scientia, which means to have knowledge. So basically, science is just knowing things about the world around us. If we don't know things about the world around us, then we can't even give our Creator glory for those things. They're all pointing back to Him.

Roger Marsh:

There's a big push in society, especially with younger people, to have questions about their identity. You know, who I am. And sometimes it's very basic. Am I male? Am I female? Am I non-binary? Or, you know, whatever. I mean, you and I would agree there's male and female, but there are other people who are being led to believe there's not. But then there's that, you know, why am I here? You know, that whole sense of purpose. And I know that a central theme of your ministry is literally that our identity is being rooted in, and I'm going to quote you here, "being intentionally created by God." Talk about why an experience with one of your books or one of your podcasts or even the Wonder Center is so essential now more than ever before for younger people to understand what identity is really all about and where it comes from.

David Rives:

Yeah. On the David Rives Ministries YouTube channel, we post every week something called the Kids Corner. And it's just four minutes, usually shot here in the Wonders Center, where I pick up an actual artifact from one of the display cases and then teach lessons based on that artifact. Or I pick up a live animal and teach lessons based on that animal. The important consideration is when we have 22 veteran suicides every single day. When we've got teen suicide on the rise, when we have childhood depression on the rise, when we have school shootings, when we have atrocities in the society around us, and we say, why, why God would you let this happen? And then we realize, wait a second. We've been teaching these children for the past two generations or three generations at least that they are accidents, that they are animals, that they serve no purpose, that they're just here to live, die, and that's all there is. So could we turn the tide, I might say, if we began telling people that they are fearfully and

wonderfully made, that they are made in the image of God, and that they have uniqueness through and their identity can be found through Christ. And so that's something that I wrote about in my second book, *21 Verses Backed by Science*, is the uniqueness of each person through DNA. Because DNA is basically like the code of life. The blueprint that makes you who you are. And there's even a hint of this, just a tiny little hint in the Bible. King David said, "Thine eyes," talking about the Lord, "the Lord's eyes did see my substance. Yet when there was nothing of me in thy book, all my members were written in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them." Wait a second. A continual fashioned book before we were ever born. Whoa. What is DNA? DNA is this long strand of double helix that has the letters, the book that makes us who we are. And it makes us entirely unique. Before we were born, our parents at the very time of conception, we had our own unique genetic code, our own unique book. And geneticists tell us, hey, there are trillions upon trillions of combinations that makes up human DNA. And based on the arrangement of all those combinations, it makes you a unique individual. So we're unique, not just from birth. from the very moment of conception, and yet we're still trying to find our identity.

We're trying to find our identity because we're not being told this in schools. We're not being taught this in universities. We're not being taught this when we turn on our television channel. The only places we're being taught this is for maybe a couple of hours on a Sunday morning in a church when someone is flipping through the channels and they turn on the James Dobson Family Institute broadcast or a few other places, right? We're not getting enough of that message. So through my books, through the kids' corners on our YouTube channel, through our podcasts and our television programs that I host, through the Wonders Center and Science Museum, all of those outreaches, including, you know, I lead family safaris, photo safaris to Africa and put people in the middle of the African bushveld, booking out entire private reserves. We have our own cabins. We get in open-air game vehicles, and at sunrise, we see animals at golden hour with the sun shining through the mane of a lion or over the tops of giraffe just waking up. And then we look at the stars at night in the southern hemisphere with no light pollution on these exotic 11-day African photo safaris. And when I lead these things, people's eyes just open to things they never thought possible. They never knew that every animal is telling this story of design, telling this story that it is engineered with perfection. And even though we live in a world where there is death, disease, and destruction, that's not because God created it that way. The Bible says in Genesis that He made everything very good. We messed it up, but hey, He provided a way through that as well, and that's through Jesus Christ.

Roger Marsh:

You know, it's interesting, David, as you're talking about that double helix in our unique book, if you will, of who we are. And I think, I wonder how many people, and this is going to sound like a really kind of pedantic analogy in the other direction, but I can't help but think of how people view life. You remember the movie *Dumbo*, the cartoon?

David Rives: Yes.

Roger Marsh: And there's the stork. and they got a little baby elephant, and they just happened to drop one here and one here and this. I wonder how many people really honestly, they go, oh, what a cute movie. Isn't that sweet? Dumbo's the big ears. But I wonder how many people really think, yeah, you don't know what you're going to get with a kid.

I literally had a conversation with a professional in the industry, secular guy, who was giving the whole, well, you know, the DNA of a chicken and a human and a snake or whatever is about the same for the first 10 weeks. I don't know where you're getting that, but you can see where if you just follow science and you don't trust where God is going with all of this, you really can get messed up. I mean, and I'm sure there are a lot of people that you've encountered over the years that have that same kind of "worldview." Maybe even some people who are professing Christians might still hold on to some of those beliefs.

David Rives: Yeah, it's true, Roger. A lot of Christians still don't understand how to think about all of this. And so they tend to just sort of slide into whatever. Well, scientists are smart. They know more than I do. So I guess I'm just going to trust them. Right. And that's where a lot of times we get into trouble because we have two sources of inspiration here. We have God's inspired Word. That would be our Bibles that we should be dusting off of our nightstands and reading. And then we have the world around us, which is the world that God created, and it's talking to us too. But so often we say, well, if a scientist says something, they probably know more than me, so I'm going to believe them, and I will try to insert their doctrine, which is usually atheistic, their doctrine into what God has told us in His Word, right? Proverbs says, "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, unless you be found a liar." Don't be adding to Scripture. Don't be trying to insert man's current best ideas into the Bible or into our Christian worldview or into whatever it may be. Instead, start with the Bible as your foundation of truth and allow God to work through you and show you what science is actually showing us. And that's something that is very, very needed in today. Today more than ever, we're learning that we are designed. You are designed. We're living in an age of design where all new scientific discoveries, the cutting edge things, are pointing us back to these components of engineering and complexity that are ordered, that are not chaotic, and therefore never could come about by random chance processes. That means that there has to be a mind behind it all. We know the mind.

Roger Marsh: Yes, we certainly do. We know the mind. We know His heart. Is there one of your discoveries, whether it be in these stars or in the ground or whatever, where you can look at and say, okay, anybody who thinks that we're just here randomly, I can point to this discovery as the place where we can say, no, this is where God showed up big.

David Rives: I would absolutely have to point to astronomy here because we have found over 5,000 extrasolar planets. Those are rocks orbiting other stars, right? And a lot of

times the headlines, the click-bait headlines that you're going to see on Facebook or you're going to see on the news, a new planet discovered and it probably contains life. It looks like it's the correct distance from its host planet for habitation. It's about the right size. It has moderated gravity. It probably has liquid water. We think it has, you know, the right type of atmosphere. Everything is poised for alien life to be on this planet. There are these reports every few weeks on the news. But a few years back, there was a report exactly like this. And it says planet Gliese 581. What a name. We've discovered it. It probably contains life. It has all of these features. They laid it all out. And a few weeks later realized that it was a blip in the data. and that there was not even a planet there. They had misread it, right? So when you consider that out of all of the planets that we've discovered so far, and you consider the number of factors that are necessary for human life, for us to live and live comfortably, the chances of out of billions upon billions upon billions of potential planets in our universe, the chances of one of them containing human life is so marginally small that my friends who are mathematicians at Oxford University and my other colleagues, they say, well, this is what we would call mathematically improbable.

And then you say, well, what does mathematically improbable mean? They say, well, David, what it actually means is, in layman's terms, impossible, right? And so it is an impossibility that there's another planet, even given the vast number of planets that are out there, another planet like our home. And so all of these factors seem perfect for us. That doesn't surprise me. Isaiah 45 says, "Thus saith the Lord God himself who formed the earth and made it, he hath established it, he created it not in vain, and he formed it to be inhabited." In other words, the earth was specially formed for us to live on so that He could have a relationship with us. And so when you look at all of the factors and you see that God prepared a special place called earth for us, that is the tip of the iceberg. Because what makes earth so special in the midst of an inhospitable universe that is only there to declare God's glory. It's not there for alien life to thrive in. What makes Earth so special is not all of those factors like a magnetic field that protects us from solar radiation or an abundance of liquid water so that we can drink or terrestrial planet with land so that we have somewhere to stand on. That's not what makes earth special. What makes earth so special is that God sent His only begotten son down to this little speck floating in space so that we could be a part of His family for eternity. That is the gospel message, and that is no coincidence. We live in a universe designed for us because God loves us and wants to know us for eternity.

Roger Marsh: What's coming up at the Wonders Center later throughout the course of this year? You just had your big conference, first ever. You're doing all sorts of different activities. What does the fall of 2026 look like at the Wonders Center?

David Rives: The fall is stacked up to be pretty exciting. We've got some kids' days coming up. And again, you can go to wonderscenter.org to get the events scheduled because there's always something happening. And during these kids' days,

we have interactive experiences, special walkthroughs of the museum like you know face painting and special snacks at Java Man Café. We've got new animals arriving for the wonders of the sea aquariums on the lower levels. On the upper levels we're working on an exhibit hall called Knowledge Hall, and Knowledge Hall goes through these biblical nuggets of knowledge that are very scientific that can be found all throughout Scripture as we read through and how they're all pointing us back to Christ.

Roger Marsh:

And I think what's really unique about that whole message, right, is a lot of times we're told that the Bible is simply a collection of myths written by goat herders. When I speak at universities, when I speak all over the world at churches, when I speak at, there will typically be a skeptic or so, you know, and the skeptic will come up and they'll say, yeah, David, you're one of those Christians, aren't you? I bet you just believe in that ancient collection of myths written by goat herders. And I say, you know, you actually have a portion of this correct. I do believe in an ancient collection of writings written by goat herders. By shepherds, right? By poets. Some of them were kings. Do you know what they weren't? They weren't scientists. Yeah, the authors of the Bible were not scientists, and yet somehow, they got the science 100% correct. Somehow, they got the history 100% correct. Somehow, they got the prophecy 100% correct. Somehow, they got the gospel 100% correct. What are the chances of a random collection of shepherds and poets and kings getting all of that correct? Not by themselves. No, it points to the inspiration of God. He downloaded the words for them to write so that thousands of years down the road, we can trust what we read in our Bibles is absolutely true. When people say the Bible is not a science textbook, I say amen and I certainly am glad. Science textbooks have to be updated every few years. The Bible never has needed to be changed. It has stood the test of time and we can trust in it from beginning to end.

Roger Marsh:

Well, and I love the fact that your second book, as you mentioned, *21 Verses Backed by Science*, underscores that fact. I mean, the fact that we don't have to try to shoehorn faith into scientific discoveries to make it look like they're Christian. This is really the science backing and supporting Christian Scriptures as opposed to the other way around it. And you articulate that so very, very well. You were homeschooled, right?

David Rives:

I was homeschooled. Yes, I was homeschooled all the way through. I was never particularly a bright student with my books, with my textbooks. I loved studying the things that interested me. My parents gave me the freedom to be able to explore things and read astrophysics journals and explore the world around me outside as well. And I appreciate that so much because it really did instill. These passions that then developed into the lanes that led to the Wonders Center and Science Museum or led to the African photo safaris or led to the family paleontology or dinosaur digs that I lead in Kansas. All of these things stemmed from being able to explore the world on my own without rigid bounds and use it to take me to different places.

Roger Marsh: Well, I'm sure they "love" you on college campuses too. They're like, where'd you get your Ph.D.? You're like, well, I don't. Now, you talked about that with Dr. Dobson last time you were here on the program. Any thought about moving into that? Or is that kind of like Billy Graham used to say, would you run for president? He'd say, no, I'm not going to take a step backwards to run for president. But I got a call to evangelize. What's your take on the state of education in America right now?

David Rives: Sadly, Roger, with a lot of schools and universities, I don't call it higher education. I call it higher indoctrination tendency with professors, over 60% of professors in America who are biologists. Biology professors in America are self-professed atheists or agnostics. And I don't care how unbiased they try to be, that's going to rub off on your children, on your grandchildren, when over 60% are self-professed atheists or agnostics. So we have to be very, very careful and strategic. There are many things that you do need a degree. However, at the same time, I feel that the Lord, I know that the Lord has called me into these fields of science without a degree to be able to speak at a layman's level. My colleagues who have Ph.D.'s in most of these fields, whether it's biology, geology, paleontology, astronomy, astrophysics, archaeology, genetics, we could go on and on, right? Most of my colleagues have done great work, and yet they speak at a level that makes it incredibly hard for most people to understand. And our calling in David Rives Ministries and in the Wonders Center is to take scientific concepts and break them down so simply that every layman can understand it and then show how those scientific things, the things in the world around us, are pointing us right back, solid to our faith. That is our calling. Those are our email updates every week. Those are the things that we push out with free videos, with free resources, with free podcasts. And we appreciate everything that you guys do to promote this to families who are in desperate need of tools just like this.

Roger Marsh: Well, it's our pleasure and privilege to walk alongside with you. I know how much Dr. Dobson appreciated your ministry, as do I. And we'll put links for David Rives Ministries, wondercenter.org, and your Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube channel, too, especially with those shorts. I know that's going to be of tremendous value to parents and grandparents who are part of the JDFI universe, as it were. David Rives, davidrivesministry.org. Thanks so much for making the time. I know you're a very, very busy guy, but we appreciate you so much being with us today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

David Rives: Roger, thank you so much for having me.

Roger Marsh: You know, there's something very humbling about realizing that the same God who hung the galaxies in place also wrote the unique code tucked inside each and every one of us. You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and my conversation today with David Rives, author, speaker, and founder of the Wonders Center Science and Museum. By the way, if you missed any part of today's program, or if you'd like to share it with a friend who's wrestling with questions about faith and science, you can listen to both parts

one and two when you go to drjamesdobson.org. And when you go there, you'll also find a link for the websites for davidrivesministries.org, as well as the Wonders Center and Science Museum. That link is wonderscenter.org. And now I want to tell you about a special opportunity to invest in the work of the ministry here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. 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 every gift made through July 31st will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$250,000.

Now, conversations like the one you heard today are exactly why Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute exist, to bring trusted voices into your home and into your vehicle, to help families navigate a culture that often points them away from biblical truth. but we can't do this work alone. So please make a generous donation and know that your gift will be doubled when you go online to jdfi.org. You can also call a member of our constituent care team. That number is 877-732-6825. Or you can send your contribution 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.

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 join us 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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