



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** From Poverty to Ph.D. – Part 2

**Guest(s):** Dr. Carol Swain

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

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and today we're continuing a remarkable conversation featuring Dr. Dobson, and Dr. Carol Swain. Now, Dr. Swain grew up in rural poverty as one of 12 children, often missing a lot of school simply to survive. Later she would go on to earn not one but five college degrees, and also teach at some of America's most prestigious universities. But academic success, and professional accolades left her searching for something more. So, stay with us right now as Dr. Swain shares her extraordinary journey from poverty to Ph.D. right here on Family Talk. Doctor?

Dr. James Dobson: Well, those of you who were with us yesterday heard the story, the early home life, and experience in College of Dr. Carol Swain, and she had just graduated from high school. When we got to that point at the end of the program. If you didn't hear that broadcast, you really ought to find it on the internet. I mean, it's just an app away, and listen, because you're going to really be moved by what you're going to hear today, but it begins with what we said yesterday. Carol, thank you for being back with us. And I want to tell you a story. You told me one yesterday. I had a friend named David Hernandez. David came out of utter poverty in Mexico, and his father was a Christian, and a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. And the whole family was Christian, but they had no resources, none. And they were hungry, and they swam the Rio Grande River, and made it into the United States.

Those who are concerned about illegal entrance into the United States, before you get too angry about that, listen to this story. Reverend Hernandez didn't have food for his family, and couldn't find a job of any type in the United States. So, he went to the governor's mansion in Arizona, and sat around on the grounds knowing that that man had to come out at some time. And when the governor came out, Mr. Hernandez went to him, and said, "Sir, we're not asking for food. We don't want money. We want a job. Would you give us a job?" And he gave them a job, and they began working the potato crop, and other crops up, and down the state of California. They lived under trees, they had an oil drum stove, and little David was the oldest son. He had never lived in even a chicken coop, because they lived out under the trees.

You can imagine that little boy being out there, no schooling, no resources, no one to really help him except he was a believer in Jesus Christ. Well, the Adventists saw him out there, and gave him a scholarship, and he began going to an Adventist school. And like you, he was brilliant, and he was able to do the work, and he went on at the top of his class, graduated from high school, and went to Loma Linda University, which is an Adventist University, and then to USC School of Medicine, and to Loma Linda University School of Medicine. Graduated at the top of his class, went on, and became an OBGYN, I think world-known, and my friend, and who would've believed that humble little family with nothing, really, nothing would go on to produce a child who would become just a highly competent physician in that way. That story reminds me of you in a way, because that is in essence what has happened to you. You graduated from college, we heard that last time, and then you began working through graduate school. Tell us that story.

Dr. Carol Swain: Well, I never anticipated that I would become a university professor. And when I embarked in my college career, all I was thinking about was I had been in bad situations, a bad marital situation. I just wanted to earn enough money to be able to take care of my children. And so I earned the four-year degree in criminal justice. When I thought about my career options, I knew I did not want a law enforcement career. I thought I would do public administration, so I went to Virginia Tech to get my next degree, and I assumed that I would work for the government, and my degree was in political science.

But once I got there, professors took an interest in me, and they started encouraging me to go to graduate school. So, I applied to graduate school to UNC, and to Duke. I got admitted to the University of North Carolina, and started the Ph.D. program. And while I was there, I was mentored by people that didn't look like me. I gave conference papers, I did whatever they told me I needed to do to be successful, which was come up with original ideas, give conference papers, and I did all of that. By the time I was graduating, I was known across the country, I was able to go onto the job market with my own short list of schools. I got a sign in bonus.

Dr. James Dobson: To be a professor?

Dr. Carol Swain: To be a professor, but growing up as a child, I thought you had to be rich to go to college. And how I see God's hand is that he put people in my life that steered me, and circumstances steered me. Becoming a university professor it's like the last thing I would've chosen because I didn't know anything about being a professor.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, Carol, you turned out to be an outstanding student in all of the schools. You have what, five degrees now?

Dr. Carol Swain: Yes, I do.

Dr. James Dobson: And one of them is a Ph.D. from North Carolina University. In what?

Dr. Carol Swain: In political science.

Dr. James Dobson: So, when I introduced you yesterday as Dr. Carol Swain, that's because you do hold an earned Ph.D. from a big university.

Dr. Carol Swain: Yes, I have a Ph.D. from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and two master's degrees, one from Virginia Tech, and the other from Yale in law.

Dr. James Dobson: Who would've believed that little girl that you used to be who didn't go to school a hundred, and something days per year because of circumstances would actually earn a Ph.D. from a major university, and then go on to be a professor at Princeton?

Dr. Carol Swain: That was where I got my tenure, my first job, and then I went from there to Vanderbilt. And so I've been at two elite institutions, but to me the greatest miracle is that I was so painfully shy as a child, and throughout my young adulthood that I would literally forget how to speak, and God removed that shyness after I had my Christian conversion experience.

Dr. James Dobson: You would write the words out of your lecture.

Dr. Carol Swain: I would write the words out, and in college I would write down the question I was going to ask, or the comment, and I would read it, and my voice would be quivering, and I would clutch the lectern. If someone asked me my name, I'd be so nervous, I would freeze, I would forget it. And the Lord impressed on my mind that he had given me a message that was bigger than me. As long as I focused on him, I could deliver the message. And since then I would say that I've given thousands of interviews starting in the early 2000s on radio, TV, print because I believe that God has called me to be a spokesperson to speak truth to power.

And I learned a lot along the way about role models, because the people that God has used in my life were not people that looked like me. They were white, in almost every case they were male, they were older, and they were conservative. And they really instilled in me this belief that I could do anything. And I did not see myself as handicapped, disadvantaged because I was black, I was poor. I was a woman. I had children part of that time I was divorced. I did not see myself as handicapped.

Dr. James Dobson: And then how did you come to know Jesus Christ?

Dr. Carol Swain: I became a devout believer late in my life, in my forties, and this was after I had won national prizes, and had been very successful in academia as a professor. Once I got to tenure, I would say that God yanked a rug out from under my feet because nothing I had accomplished brought me satisfaction. I won the highest

prize in my profession, the Woodrow Wilson Prize for best book in politics in the United States. It competed nationwide, and I was the first black, and the second woman to win that prize, and I won the prize for the best book on Congress. I was a co-winner of the VO Key Award for best book on Southern politics. This was my first book, and I was earning more money than I ever imagined I would be earning. I should have been happy, but I was not happy. Those prizes, and that recognition did not fill those empty places. God used students in my classes as well as secretaries, staff people that always had a heart for those people, I guess because of my background. But he was always after me, and he won.

Dr. James Dobson: Tell me about that experience. Do you remember just literally consciously opening your heart to him?

Dr. Carol Swain: Well, I mean it was like a long journey, I would say, of just seeking, and being interested in spiritual things. But I was in a medical hospital in Princeton in 1997 where I had an experience that I felt as if my life was being played out in front of me with a narrator. And that narrator was showing me different points in my life telling me to choose. And I felt like the narrator was showing that sometimes I was good. Sometimes I was like an angel, sometimes I was like a devil. What was it going to be? And I chose Jesus Christ that was a black Pentecostal chaplain at the Princeton Hospital, and anyone that knows about Princeton would know that that's not the kind of hospital that you get a Pentecostal chaplain that you might get Catholic, a Lutheran, Episcopalian, you don't get black Pentecostal.

But he was there, and he talked with me, and prayed with me, and there was a cleaning lady that threw a book in my bed in the hospital bed about Jesus. And she said, "This is all you need." And that Pentecostal pastor arranged for me to get baptized, and I got baptized in the winter in a cold metal tub of what felt like ice water in Trenton took me two years later to realize what it meant to be a Christian. And so that two years after that baptism in that little church, I was blending Christianity, new age, and Eastern. I had the Swain religion, but God was still-

Dr. James Dobson: The Lord really took you on a journey.

Dr. Carol Swain: Yeah, He kept sending people to me, and it was like there was no way to get away from it. But I started changing my life, and I have been the kind of person that I always felt the church was full of hypocrites, and I would never be one of those hypocrites. That's how I felt. And I don't think I would have been comfortable going to a church if I was actively practicing sin, if I was involved in fornication, or any kind of big thing that I knew was sin.

So, my life sort of cleaned up before I knew I was ready to become a devout believer of Christ. And at that point, it all came together for me. I realized that my life did not belong to me, that my life belonged to Jesus, and I knew what it meant to be a follower of Jesus, that everything just totally came clear to me, and I've never looked back. And that was the end of my spiritual journey. And

I'm sure that people that have known me all my life waited for the other shoe to drop, and my faith in Christ has been enduring.

Dr. James Dobson: We don't have time for the complete story. And there are books that you've written, and there's more to it than we're going to be able to cover, but you have become very conservative in your outlook on life. And you've been in a very liberal setting at these major universities where you've been targeted by students, very liberal students, and sometimes professors, and the local paper, and everything that has done everything they could to destroy you. You have stood up against all that. There's a wonderful story there, Carol, and I urge you to write this story. I mean it's remarkable when all aspects of it are understood. It is just really unbelievable what God has done in your life. And it is a story about Him, not you.

Dr. Carol Swain: It is, and that body of Christ, because I don't think I would've survived had it not been for the prayers of the saints. And that was the biggest thing that came out of my salvation experience is that all of a sudden I had Christ, and I had the body of Christ.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, and they have supported you, and prayed for you, and been with you, and you've had the courage to stand up in a place where not very many people would have survived. And I admire you for that. Now, with our remaining time, I wish there were more. You have written a book called *Abduction*, and it has to do with what the culture is doing to young people today. Our children, the children of Christian people are being snatched away, and they have been taught an alien philosophy, and theology, and way of life things, that are wrong. And this is going on in universities all around the country, and even in public schools. And you said to me today, even in private schools.

Dr. Carol Swain: Yes, I mean there's clearly a war against the children of believers. And a lot of parents are very trusting of the educational system. And what they miss is that there are people that have chosen to become teachers in public, and private schools just to get access to the children. And they have an indoctrination, this new morality that moves them away from the Judeo-Christian values, and principles that Christian children are taught in Sunday school, and by their parents. It moves them towards the humanism, the secularism, the political correctness, and the political left is doing a very effective job of stealing the children of believers.

Dr. James Dobson: You saw that firsthand.

Dr. Carol Swain: I saw it firsthand. And there's so many parents that will tell you that when that child went off even to middle school by Thanksgiving, you see them shifting, and the political left shames the children, and they treat Christianity in such a way that it stigmatizes. And I don't believe that we are doing enough to prepare our children for what they're going to confront in the world. One of the things that's needed is worldview training as well as apologetics. And that needs to be a part of the Sunday school curriculum. And parents need to realize that when they

send their children to certain institutions, and there are many institutions that have prestige, they are cooperating sometimes in a system that would destroy that child, and everything they've tried to pour into the child.

Dr. James Dobson: Would you recommend that the people who are listening to us today, and have high school graduates, and young people that are deciding what to do next, go to those big prestigious schools, and allow them to be subjected to the belief system that's alien to what Christians believe? What recommendations do you have to them?

Dr. Carol Swain: Well, part of my recommendations has to do with the parents need to educate themselves about the world system. And even some of the Christian schools are not safe places. Many of the people that I've met whose faith has been destroyed, the children's faith had been destroyed. It happened at a Christian school because when you go there, sometimes you let your guard down, you assume you are with people who are going to share your values. That's not always true.

And I think that before parents pay their hard-earned money, or the money they inherited to send that child to a college, and university, they need to make sure that that child is sufficiently grounded in their faith, and in their knowledge so that they will not be swept away because there is an indoctrination system that's designed to unlearn everything they've been taught about their own values. And so parents need to be informed about what's taken place, and they need to, if they have children that are in public schools, or elite private schools to be quizzing those kids about what they're learning, to be looking at the textbooks, to really be meeting the teachers, because otherwise, by the time they are made aware, it can be too late.

Dr. James Dobson: It's impossible for me to express how strongly I feel about what you just said. And obviously I agree with you 100%. Let me clarify to say that there are a lot of great Christian teachers who are giving their lives to transmit their faith to the children who have been sent there, and doing, even if they're in public schools, everything they can to defend the things that they believe, and that they know their parents believe. So, a lot of that goes on, and we can't castigate all teachers for that.

Dr. Carol Swain: I agree.

Dr. James Dobson: But I'm telling you, that's not the norm. The norm, especially in the large state universities, the large prestigious schools. But everywhere today, the culture wants to take your children to Hell, and they're working on it every day. And you have to be very, very careful what you subject your sons, and daughters to, not only in colleges, and graduate schools, but throughout the educational system starting in kindergarten. It is amazing what is being done. And when you talk about stealing their minds away, I have seen it. I believe it, and it scares me to death.

Dr. Carol Swain: And the professors, and teachers who are Christian who are fighting against that system, they find themselves targeted a lot, and it's very important for us to support them, and to use the resources God has given us in a way that we are good stewards, but we are not funding things that are destroying the values of our children.

Dr. James Dobson: Dr. Carol Swain has been our guest yesterday, and today, and I've enjoyed so much not only hearing about your story, but what comes next. You are speaking, and using your influence along the line of what we just talked about with this abduction concern, but other things, God's not through with you yet, is he?

Dr. Carol Swain: No. He's clearing my schedule, I think for bigger, and better things, and I will be still speaking on university campuses, and still trying to help the believer strategize about how to restore what's left of our Judeo-Christian heritage.

Dr. James Dobson: What a fascinating conversation this has been, and especially seeing what God has done with you from those early, early days when He was saying to you, "You're different, Carol. I've got a plan for you, and I'm going to show you what it is as you go along." He's done that, hasn't He?

Dr. Carol Swain: He certainly has. One the Scriptures that he has impressed on my mind is Jeremiah 1:5, "Before I formed you in your mother's womb. I knew you." And that applies to all of us.

Dr. James Dobson: It does. And for those who are listening to us who don't know him, who have not met him, who have not had the kind of encounter you, and I have enjoyed, would simply pray a simple prayer. You don't have to earn it, do you? You don't have to get out, and prove it. All you have to do is accept it, and I trust that the Lord will use what we've been saying these two days to have an influence on thousands of people who are listening to us. Blessings to you, Dr. Swain.

Dr. Carol Swain: Thank you so much.

Dr. James Dobson: I honor you for what you've done with your life, and how hard you've worked to get where you are. But it's only the beginning.

Dr. Carol Swain: To God be the glory.

Roger Marsh: Amen. Dr. Swain's journey from childhood poverty to becoming a distinguished professor beautifully illustrates how faith, determination, and mentorship can transform a life. While this concludes our powerful two-part conversation featuring our own Dr. James Dobson, and a special in-studio guest, Dr. Carol Swain on today's edition of Family Talk. By the way, if you missed part one, I encourage you to catch up by going online to [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk), and search our broadcast archives there. Also, don't forget you can spend a few minutes every day gaining wisdom for your family, and your marriage with free

reading plans from the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Simply download the Bible app by YouVersion on your phone, or tablet, and search for our ministry JDPI to get started today. Well, I'm Roger Marsh, inviting you back next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust, for the family you love.

Announcer:

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