



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Al Cason: The Testimony of a Restored Life – Part 2

Guest(s): Al Cason

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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.

Gary Bauer: Well, folks, welcome back to Family Talk. I'm Gary Bauer, and as you know, we've been talking to Al Cason of Bud's Best Cookies, and he's been telling us an incredible story about what he went through in life, the mistakes that were made, but also the great redeeming power of Jesus Christ. So let's get right back into it. Al, welcome back.

Al Cason: I'm glad to be back. Thank you, Gary.

Gary Bauer: Al, you mentioned tough love. As I recall, there was a point where your parents actually called law enforcement to do a wellness check on you, presumably because they hadn't heard anything. Tell us about that and what that led to.

Al Cason: Well, Gary, you know, we, and I'll kind of go through it quickly, but, you know, after that first rehab, I came back, worked for a couple of years. My family had an intervention on me where all the family was over, came over to the house and they all read the letters and we went through all that. It was very emotional. They had an interventionist there, of course, and I agreed to go and went off to Betty Ford for four weeks. Again, came back from there, another maybe 60 days max, I was using again. But I went to, I ended up, kind of bottoming out again at work, maxed out all the credit cards, really was in a mess, just didn't have any other way to turn around. And, you know, I went lying to my father that, you know, I'm his only son and, you know, and he wanted to try to help me, wanted to try to fix it. And he's like, look, you know, you need to go to rehab again. You know, I'll help you. I'll get all this mess cleared up for you, but, you know, you've got to go get better.

And so I went off to Crossroads in Antigua to Eric Clapton's rehab. And while it was very good and it really helped, I came back and my son's mother, you know, she was kind of rolling her way and I was trying to stay sober. And so I started drinking non-alcoholic beer, which, you know, I learned you can't romanticize the addiction, no matter, you can't lean into it in any kind of way.

Gary Bauer: Yes.

Al Cason: And, you know, I've also tried, Gary, you know, just marijuana or just pills or just, you know, drinking or just, you know, you cannot feed this thing in any way or it's alive and well.

Gary Bauer: It's a monster.

Al Cason: It is an absolute monster. And so, you know, after going to Crossroads and having this other experience so that's three inpatient rehabs that I've been to gapped about two years. My father finally fired me for the last time and it was really bad. I mean I had to...I literally had to drink during the day. The functioning alcoholic thing wasn't working anymore I mean I'd have to leave and go drink and come back just to get by. I was having to do coke just to wake me up. And, I mean, it was really out of hand. And he fired me this last time. And when he did, you know, I felt bad for myself, poor me, you know, how, you know, bad it is. You know, my ex-wife had left with my son, and it was just me and my addiction, no job, no nothing. And Gary, I just piled on. I mean, this was like okay, you know, this is my opportunity to just really lean into this thing now. And for about a year, day and night, I mean, I would be up for five, six days at a time and finally fall asleep. And when I would fall asleep and I came back to, you know, it was my dog nudging me that got me up. And this dog was just a faithful dog and a friend to me.

And the cocaine hysteria, the way it can do in your mind and the paranoia and the things caused some really crazy things to happen to me along the way that were really horrific in ways that looking back, I'm like, God, I know You saved me over and over. I know. I mean because you know I like guns and I had a lot of guns in my home and you know I mean I'd wake up and I'd have a you know cocked 357 right under my pillow because I was afraid somebody was coming in and in that kind of craze, I could have easily shot myself or anything else. Gary, there were nights that I came back that I passed out and I'd have some a woman in my house that I had no idea who she was, didn't know where she came from and had moved in with me when I was in a blackout. And, you know, I mean, this happened time after time. And, you know, I mean, I could have come to and everything could have been gone out of my home. I mean, I could have been, no telling, that could have killed me. I mean, you know, all the places, I mean, I'd wake up in these drug houses on the other side of Birmingham, places that I had no business being. And there's no doubt that God was with me and protected me because of my parents' faithfulness in their prayers and what they learned all these years from Brother Dobson.

And, you know, it was just, it was unbelievable. And, you know, and so, you know, this really progressed to a point that all the things that you say you do in addiction that you would never do, you start doing. And, you know, the people that were coming in and out of my house, they were, you know, I mean, hey, cocaine, you know, hey, you can cook it and it's freebasing cocaine. Well, the next thing you know, you've got a crack problem. You know, the next thing you know, you've got a needle in your arm. And that was something that I always

was against. You know, that was just a very violent way to get high. And I never would do that.

And that's really where I was at the very end when my parents, especially my mother, had to get the police to come and intervene because she had seen me about a week before. And she knew I was in really bad shape. I mean, she knew. I was down.... I'm 6'4". I usually weigh about 250. I was down to about 160 pounds. And she knew that I didn't have long. A friend of mine that I had really partied with and really was close to over the years had come and spent the night with me. And when he saw that I was doing things above and beyond the crack and the cocaine and the other pills and things that I was doing and I had gotten into IV drugs, he left that next morning and he came over to our plant and he asked to see my parents. And they weren't here, but they came in to see him and he just cried. He cried to them. He said, if you don't do something for my friend, he is going to die. And he was not one that would say anything. I mean, he was just compelled by the Lord to just come clean and tell them.

And so my mother got in touch with the Shelby County Sheriff's Office and asked them to come and do a wellness check. And if there was reason, you know, for them to arrest me, that I would be safer arrested than what was going to happen with me. And so they came to the house. I was in, you know, horrible condition. I had track marks in my arm and they could see it when I walked outside, and I wouldn't let them in. And they told me, they said, you won't like it if we come back. And, you know, and Gary, this really was something that was, I know God had His hand in this. I was like, well, I've got to leave. I've got to get my stuff and get out. And somebody was living with me at the time and went and did some drugs that would have normally gotten you up and really, you know, spiked you up and you'd be awake enough to leave.

Well, I passed out for about four hours, okay? When I came to, there was knocking on the front door. When I staggered to the door and opened the door, it was the Shelby County Drug Task Force. And they grabbed me off that front porch and threw me face down in my yard with handcuffs behind my back. And they stormed that house. And there was about, I'm guessing, eight or ten agents or part of that unit that went through, flipped everything, went through, tore the house apart, trying to get as many things as they could on me. And they ended up arresting me for two felonies and two misdemeanors that they held. And they wouldn't put a bond on me because I had some friends that might have bonded me out. And so they didn't set a bond. They held me until I would end up for 26 days. I was locked up in the Shelby County Jail until I was willing to sign over a power of attorney to my parents and agree to go to this rehab. And so after 26 days, they had an interventionist. They didn't even want my family to see me because I might be able to talk them out of it somehow.

Gary Bauer:

Yes.

Al Cason:

But backing up, this is really something. The next day after I was arrested, as bad as I looked, and I was in jail, that was the first day, like it was a Friday, and

they had to kind of arraign me. And when I went into the courtroom, I was in shackles. My hands were handcuffed, my feet were shackled, and I walked in with the rest of the inmates. And my father was in that courtroom along with my sister and my mother. And when he saw me, and I don't know what had happened, but Gary, I guess I had used a clipper and shaved my hair about two days before because it seemed like a good idea at the time. And when I would look in that mirror, Gary, I didn't even recognize who I was. Not physically, but I did not know who I was. I was in such a dark place. And when I would come to these days, you know, I would wonder, you know, I couldn't even imagine coming back to after all that I'd been doing. And it was crazy.

But when we were in that courtroom, my father saw me when they said my name and I stepped out and he just wailed. Just, I mean, I'll never forget the wail, scream, cry that he let out in that courtroom when he saw me. And they had to take him out. And the judge had arraigned me, and part of what my parents had tried to do at this actual court was have me work somewhere along the lines of one of the rehabs I had gotten out of. They had had me work in this drug court there so I could see what drugs did to people and the consequences. And even though I had done that for about a year, here I am, arrested. Back in front of the judge that was the judge that oversaw this when I was even there working many years before. And I worked while I was still working for my father, but he had me go do that in the afternoon. So they tried everything they could. They had preachers come in my office and pray with me. I mean, you name it, they tried it along the way.

Gary Bauer: Neither your earthly father or your father in Heaven gave up on you, Al, right? Or you wouldn't be here today?

Al Cason: They absolutely did not. And, you know, with that, you know, after 26 days, I agreed to go to this long-term rehab. And it was in Blairstown, New Jersey. And I was there, Gary, I was there for 14 months. I had to come out of there and they held the charges over my head. So if I left, the charges would stick and I would get arrested. But while I was there, I found out, I mean, I really thought I was about to leave, that my parents were going to get me out or my dad was going to get me out. And I found out that my son's mother had had some problems and my son had been awarded temporary custody to his great aunt on her side. And so while I felt like, and they were seeing him every other weekend and they had been paying child support for me and they had been doing all these things. Well, at that point that, you know, neither his mother or his father were there for him.

And Gary, out of all that I'd been through, I really hadn't had a bottom until then. And when that crashed down on me about my son being awarded to his great aunt. Well, I'm locked up. She's not around. You know, I just felt helpless. And I just, you know, I just started crying. I mean, I just, I broke, you know, after all the other things, all the other bad things, right? All you name it. And I went through it. Okay. But that point right there is when I hit my knees and I said, God, I need You. You know, I guess I'm where You want me to be. I surrender

this to You. And that's when things started changing, Gary. And that's when it took a turn. And it still took time. You know, you have to bring, you know, faith can move a mountain, but bring the shovel. I had to really do that. I had to do the work at that point. And I had to really get my relationship back with my father, you know, my heavenly Father that had always been there. And, you know, nothing became more clear to me over that period of time that there is no doubt that God spared me so many times through this.

Gary Bauer: Yes.

Al Cason: I mean, you know, they even said it when I was in the jail and they were having to give me meds with the DTs that I was going through. Held me in solitary for three weeks the last week I was in general population, but they had to give me stuff to bring me down. And I would shake in that cell. I was shaking and going through. I mean, you know what DTs can be.

Gary Bauer: Yeah, I saw my father go through that and it's horrifying.

Al Cason: It's horrifying.

Gary Bauer: Yeah.

Al Cason: I mean, you feel like you're out of your mind.

Gary Bauer: So, Al, I mean, we all know the biblical story of the prodigal son, but after all that, and I guess, you know, listening to you, we're probably talking about a decade, but your parents welcomed you back as the prodigal son, right? As far as the responsibilities they were willing to entrust with you with again and the company and so forth. And so tell us a little bit about that. And, you know, people are wondering what you look like now. I got the advantage of looking at you Al, and it's hard to believe that you went through all these things because you are obviously a successful businessman and you've built a new life and you're happily married. And so let's end on that high note of what both the love of you your parents and the love of Jesus was able to do for you.

Al Cason: Absolutely. And when I was in that long-term rehab, I realized just how it affected my family. And it's a family thing too. And I hurt them. And, you know, all the I'm not doing it or I'm going to get well or all this, you know, all those things, you know, the only way you can really, you have to live an amend. Okay? You can't just say it. You have to live it. And by me living the right way and living for God and doing the things that I need to do, you know, sometimes it's just a day at a time, Gary, but, you know, God's gotten me 21 years of sobriety now. And when I got back home, I had to go through an outpatient rehab for 30 days. I had to go through drug court for eight months after I did that. So I was in treatment of some sort for over two and a half, a little over two years.

And when I got back, dad told me, he said, "Al," he goes, "I want you to come back and I'm putting you back in the role that you left in." And I said, "Dad, you

know, I'm not worthy of that." And he said, "No, you're my son. And yes, you are. You know, God heard our prayers and He pulled you through." And I said, "Well, Dad, I can never repay you for what you've done for me. But what I can do is allow you to age gracefully doing what you love." And so every day that I'm here, I try to make decisions like I think he would want. I try to give back and, you know, and everyone here, you know, he's our CEO still. But, you know, even though he lets me make the daily decisions, Gary, I'll let everyone think that, you know, it's him. And so when he walks through, they love seeing him. And he's 89. And I tell you what, you know, he and I were talking over the weekend about, you know, what he does for the Christian school still and the tithes he pays to his church and the things that he does. You know, I mean, you know, he's never, and he and my mother, I'll call them and check on them several times a day if we're not over there. And they're in their Bible and they're praying.

My mother had literally, through this bad part of my life, she prayed so much for me, Gary, that she literally, in the sunroom of their house, wore the carpet out. You can tell where her knees were on that carpet, praying for me, pleading with God to spare my life. And there's no doubt that he did. And by me being sober, I met the love of my life. Jenifer, she and I will be married 13 years in January.

Gary Bauer:

Congratulations.

Al Cason:

Which, after four other marriages, is a milestone. That's what alcohol does and drugs do. It tears things apart. But I know, you know, just like the prodigal son, and he was welcomed back, and God loved him, and he saw what true forgiveness was. I see what true forgiveness is from the Father, from my heavenly Father, that would be so gracious to me, someone that is so undeserving, to give me the opportunities to have a wife like Jenifer. I mean, just precious and two stepsons that are wonderful. He's totally restored the relationship that I have with my son, Buddy, that had to see this growing up and had to be without his dad out of his life for so many years and so much time. And I've got two wonderful grandsons, Noah and Bode, and we've got a granddaughter on the way. And what a blessing that is.

What a blessing that He's been able to let me witness to some people here in our cookie factory. You know, we give jobs to some folks that might not get them other places because I tell them we're in the redemption business and where other people where Amazon might not give them a second thought or some of these other big companies down the road. We do. And why? Because of what God's done for me. And we try to help everybody as much as we can. We use people out of the centers and, you know, the sober houses and things. We really try because I know what God did for me. And I want to try to give back as much as I can to help others the way God so willingly helped me in my life.

Gary Bauer:

Well, Al, it's an incredible story and your willingness to be so open about it. You know, a lot of people would just say, man, I don't want anybody to find out about that. That's the past. I just want them to see me now. Well, you're

obviously successful now, and you're fulfilling your father's business, and it's still successful. You've built a new family. Only God knows what your children and grandchildren will end up accomplishing. So I know Dr. Dobson's heard this story now and smiling, too, from where he is. And maybe we'll all get together there someday with him and talk about all of it, right? But Al, thank you for coming on Family Talk and sharing your story. And I'm sure it's an inspiration.

And for those of you who are listening, you know, if you've done something and you think, oh, God could never forget that, or you've harmed somebody, or you failed in a marriage, or you messed up with your children, there is nothing that God can't forgive if you will welcome Jesus into your heart. And Al, you're a living example of that. God bless you. I hope you continue to thrive and your business continues to sell countless cookies to bring people a little bit of joy.

Al Cason: Thank you so much.

Roger Marsh: Well, what a powerful reminder that no life is beyond redemption. Al Cason reached a place where addiction had taken nearly everything from him, his career, his relationships, his freedom, but God had not abandoned him. As you've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's family talk today, you've heard the conclusion of Gary Bauer's conversation with Al Cason, president and COO of Bud's Best Cookies. If you missed either part of this conversation, be sure to listen again or share Al's testimony with someone who needs encouragement you can find that at drjamesdobson.org. And by the way, Bud's best cookies are absolutely delicious. I can't recommend them enough.

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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 listening 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.

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

With today's Dr. Dobson Minute, here's Dr. James Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: Fatigue and time pressure can undermine even the healthiest of marriages. How can a man and woman communicate with each other when they're too worn out to even talk. How can they take walks in the rain or sit by a fire when they face the tyranny of an unfinished to-do list? When asked these kinds of questions, most people will tell you that the pressures they feel today are the result of temporary circumstances have a way of becoming sandwiched back to back. We delude ourselves into believing that circumstances have forced us to work too hard for a short period of time, when in fact, we're driven from within. In our fast-paced society, what many of us really need is to take more time for the loving relationships with spouses and children and friends that give life meaning.

Roger Marsh: For more information, visit drdobsonminute.org.

This is Roger Marsh. Since 2010, the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute has been standing firm on these three pillars: faith, family, and freedom. We believe these foundations are essential for society to thrive and families to flourish. Every day here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we reach millions of listeners through the airwaves and online with biblical truth and practical guidelines. Your partnership makes it possible to continue this important work in a culture that opposes Christian values. So from all of us here at the JDFI, thanks so much for your prayers and your continued support.