



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Hope for Generation Z

Guest(s): Dr. Jeff Myers

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Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk, it's a ministry of James Dobson Family Institute, supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

Roger Marsh: Welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh and sitting as guest host for this program is Gary Bauer, senior vice president of public policy here at the JDPI. Our topic is one that's close to many of our hearts and that is the future of the next generation.

You ever wondered what's happening with today's young people? How can we equip them to stand firm in their faith in a culture that pulls them in conflicting directions? Well if you're a parent for grandparents concerned about Generation Z, you have tuned to the right place.

Our guest today here on Family Talk is Dr. Jeff Myers, president of Summit Ministries, an organization that's been equipping young Christians with a biblical worldview since 1962. For over six decades, Summit has been providing immersive experiences that help students understand that their faith isn't just defensible, it's transformational. Dr. Myers will be sharing insights about Generation Z. He'll also discuss the importance of Christian citizenship, and he'll offer hope for us parents and grandparents who are worried about the future of the next generation. So let's get into it right now on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk with our guest host, Gary Bauer.

Gary Bauer: Welcome to another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, a production of the broadcast division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Gary Bauer, senior vice president of public policy here at JDPI. Well you know, folks, Dr. Dobson has spent a good bit of his career, of course, fighting for faith, family, and freedom, but his focus has been American families. It's been an effort to help men and women, husbands and wives, build strong marriages. And it's also been an effort to help parents raise good, God-fearing children. And that's, again, a lifelong project for Dr. Dobson. He's written a tremendous number of books about it. And he's done, I think, almost impossible to measure good work in that area. And yet, is there someone listening that is not worried about what's happening to America's kids? There are so many signs that we've seen for decades that our kids are in trouble or children are confused. Many of them over the years seem to have moved away from the gospel. There's a lot of research about this. And I know one of the things that parents, because I'm a

parent myself and now a grandparent, Dr. Dobson and I have talked about this. One of the things we look for, all of us look for is allies. Who's gonna be on our side in this great enterprise of raising upstanding young men and women who can be the future citizen of our country and start their own families and so forth.

Well, if you're looking for an ally, a lot of people have discovered over the years you can't come up with a better ally than Summit Ministries. Summit Ministries is equipped students, parents, educators, with a biblical worldview to lead with clarity and conviction and a culture that all too often is full of confusion. Summit specializes in immersive student conferences. I mean, if you participate, if your child or grandchild participates in one of their events, you're all in. From morning to night, you're gonna get, that child's going to get, that grandchild's gonna get a unique experience that will contrary to what the local public school might be doing, not undermining what you as a Christian parent is teaching, but reinforcing, giving that child or grandchild an opportunity to hear from other adults a reinforcing message of what you've tried to teach around the dinner table or in the church you attend. Today on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, I'm joined by Dr. Jeff Myers, the president of Summit Ministries. Jeff is an educator and entrepreneur. He's the author of 18 books, including *Truth Changes Everything: How People of Faith Can Transform the World in Time of Crisis*. I've been looking forward, Dr. Myers, to this conversation. You're a respected authority. Dr. Dobson and his wife, Shirley, send you their best regards. Welcome to the show.

Dr. Jeff Myers: Thank you, Gary. It is great to be with you. We love Doc and Shirley. And my wife, Stephanie and I love the work that you do as well. We love following what you do. Stephanie was telling me, if there's only one thing we look at in our email each day, it's going to be the one from Gary.

Gary Bauer: Oh, my goodness. I gotta start charging something for that. I hear that a lot. In all seriousness, that is very encouraging to me when someone particularly of your stature says that because I know you have a lot of ways to get information and I try in that end of day report to sort of give the nuggets that men and women of faith, followers of Jesus Christ need to know about at a time when, if you just read the headline, you can get really disoriented. You and I were talking a little bit before the show about what's happening among young people. And so, let's start there. Gen Z, there's a lot of talk about Gen Z. First of all, I get these generations mixed up. All I know is I'm a Boomer and I feel it every morning when I get up. So, who is Gen Z and what good or bad do we know about them?

Dr. Jeff Myers: Well, Gen Zers, Gary, are the young adults who are between the ages of say 15 or 16 up to age 30. Above them is the millennial generation, above them is Gen X. Above them would be the Boomer generation. But there are clear differences between the generations based and how they access technology. So, one key way to think of it is, Gen Zers are the smartphone generation. They have never gone to a dictionary to look up anything, they Google it. They get their news and

all of their information from social media sites, mostly Instagram, TikTok, and some others that are similar to that. This is the generation that is in high school and in college at the present time and moving into their careers. So, we care a lot about them. I mean, they're what, 15 percent of the population, but they are 100 percent of the future. They will end up being the leaders of our nation whether they are prepared to do a good job or are not prepared.

Garu Bauer: Now, you've been doing some ministries for quite a few years.

Dr. Jeff Myers: Well, Summit Miniseries was started by David Noble in 1962. And then I attended as a student when I graduated from high school in the 1980s. The program had a tremendous effect on my life spiritually, but it also gave me the confidence that my biblical faith is defensible. So, I went off to college with that perspective and then ultimately was able to come back and be an instructor, help develop curriculum, including a course called Understanding the Times, which is used all over the world by Christian students. And then ultimately to become president 14 years ago. So, I am working with my third generation. So, I'm Gen X. I worked with my own generation. I worked with the Millennial generation, now working with Gen Z. And to make things even more confusing, next year we will begin welcoming the very first of Gen Alpha. So, we get to start the alphabet all about all over again.

Gary Baier: As I age, a good way to test mental acuity will be whether somebody can name all these generations. But it is interesting how this is, I think, sort of a recent phenomenon. and one of the things that we have to be a little careful about, of course, is generalizing about a whole group of people just based on the years they were born in, although one can make certainly broad generalizations without describing every single individual, and we'll get into that a little bit. But before we go any further, describe for our listeners who may not be familiar with you. Although I find if they're Christian parents, it's hard for me to believe they aren't familiar. What happens at a session of Summit Ministries.

Dr. Jeff Myers: Well, you mentioned immersive, that is a good word. We work hard; we play hard. At the Summit Ministry's 12-day session, students would come to the campus, we would bring to them the top Christian thought leaders in biblical worldview, apologetics, economics, cultural issues, pro-life, pro-family. And as you mentioned, we give the students the evidence. Every child needs to have somebody who also says so. And we put these students in front of the world class experts on all of these topics. Not only do they hear lectures from them, but they have a chance to personally sit and have meals with them, to have open question and answer sessions where they can ask any question they want. We encourage young adults to bring all of their tough questions with them. And then in our afternoon breaks, we play hard. We play sports, we hike, we whitewater raft, rock climb, all of those kinds of things. It is, according to the students who have attended, one of the most fulfilling experiences they've ever had in their lives, because somebody took them seriously, Gary. Somebody actually listened. Somebody actually took their questions and said, "No, those are good questions. You're a smart person. You're a curious person. Your

learner and we want to show you how to draw closer to God through Jesus because He is the truth.”

Gary Bauer:

You know, I remember a number of years ago when I worked with Bill Bennett at the Department of Education under the Reagan administration, one of the things Bennett was fond of saying, and I think he was actually quoting some professor of all things who actually seems to have stumbled around a truth. It was this idea that every child, every young person needs to have an adult who's crazy about them. An adult that puts that young person first in front of anything else, in front of a career, in front of the prospect of a new spouse, whatever it might be. And sadly, one of the marks of modern America has been that we have a pretty depressing number of young people who can legitimately conclude that there isn't somebody that puts them before anything else. And it sounds like one of the reasons Summit may be so successful is that when they're with you all during that period of time, they're getting that sense that you all care about these kids.

Dr. Jeff Myers:

Oh yeah, there's no question. And so, they'll sit in classes with 180, 200 other students. That has a power all of its own because they look around and realize, I am not alone and I am not crazy for wanting to be a Bible believing person who lives out my convictions. But then we have small groups and one-on-one mentoring. Our student staff ratio is five to one. So, there is an adult who personally cares for them. And not just college-age students, although a lot of our counselors and mentors are of that age, but also adults who are people who have children and grandchildren who are just there in, around, in the program, people they can share with who will love them unconditionally and then want to help them grow. And that motivates students to grow. I'll tell you one other thing, Gary, I love about this program is we actually, Dr. Kathy Koch comes in, she's an educational psychologist. She loves Jesus, and she shows the students how everybody is smart. She talks about eight different kinds of smart. There are a lot of young adults today who thought, well, I'm not book smart, I'm not logic smart, I'm not word smart, I guess I'm not smart. But they're all different kinds of smarts. And when young adults realize, oh wait, I am smart, I am a learner, I can't tell you, it just opens up a whole world to them. I see their entire demeanor change. I see them open up and flower and want to learn and grow. It's so impressive what happens, and the Lord does all of this. But you know, 1 percent of Gen Zers have a biblical worldview, according to George Barna. By the time the students finish at Summit Ministries, 95 percent say they claim a biblical worldview. And we track them even 10 years out, 85 percent still say they have a biblical worldview. That's just way different than the outcome you would have for not having something like Summit in your life.

Gary Bauer:

You've developed some material recently that addresses the specific question of Christian involvement in politics. And, you know, there's some interesting statistics on Gen Z and their voting habits, and it seems to reflect some of the things we're talking about. That is that Gen Z men tended to vote even more overwhelmingly for conservative candidates in the last election, whereas Gen Z young women went the other direction, said that the gender gap politically that

we've seen among adults, older adults seems even more pronounced in young Americans. But I'm wondering in the time we have left, if you could address what I think you call some common myths that Christians are being told of all ages about why they should not be involved in the political process or the public debate or going to school board meetings or caring about who gets elected, president and senator and all the rest of it. Over the years, I've run into a lot of great people who are quite satisfied to just sit in church and wait for Jesus to return. I understand that impulse, but I don't think we're called to be so heavenly focused that we're of no earthly use. And as men and women of faith, if we just sit and wait, the public square will be filled with people with quite a different idea of what our country ought to look like. So, could you talk to us a little bit about that, what philosophy drives your thinking about the obligation of Christian citizens and free nations?

Dr. Jeff Myers:

I appreciate you're asking about the philosophy because it is driven in that way. One thing we know to be true is whatever you believe about God will determine what you believe about the nature of reality. What you believe about reality will determine what you believe about what's right or wrong, which in turn will determine what you think is the value of life, what makes psychological health. So, if you start off with the right assumptions that God has revealed to us in the Bible and so we can look to His word for guidance, then you build a worldview that isn't just about your personal devotional life or the time you spend worshipping God in church. It's about everything everywhere all the time, which means it includes citizenship. It's not first and foremost about citizenship. That is a fruit of having a well rooted tree based in God's nature and character.

So, we teach the students, and I think the main myth that we try to help them address is this, that you are not choosing, when you vote, the lesser of two evils. You are choosing to lessen evil. There are no perfect candidates. You're picking the one you think, based on the biblical principles that you hold in your conscience, that you believe will help reduce evil the most, that will bring the most flourishing for people, that will bring the most prosperity that will keep crime under control and help everyday families succeed, that will stand for and respect life, that will stand for and respect marriage and recognize the importance of parents in the lives of their children. That has given a huge amount of relief to the Gen Z voters because they're realizing, oh, so I'm not looking around for some kind of a movie character perfect candidate. I'm just one step at a time using my decisions to lessen evil. We also tell them, Gary, and this is something that's I know core to everything that you do. Your vote is like the starting gun of the race. It's not the whole race. It's just the initial step that you take being involved as a citizen. So, making sure that you continue to research, find good information and then stand for the truth as you have the opportunity to do it is critical. Every time a person takes a stand, they gain a little bit of courage. And over time, if they continue to do it, then they become an actual courageous person. And in a culture that's confused, people who can ring that bell of moral clarity are the ones who ultimately have the influence.

Gary Bauer: Well put, you know, I often like to remind people that it was not a surprise to God that you ended up in America. You know, he knew exactly where you would end up and it's one of the greatest blessings in the world you can get to have ended up in a country where there is such a wide degree of freedom even though there's been a battle over that religious freedom in recent years. But if someone gives you a wonderful gift, and God did when He allowed us to be here, you're an ingrate if you don't try to take care of it, if you don't husband it and not allow somebody to mar it or hurt it. So, in some ways, you're really disrespecting this wonderful blessing that God gave us by being born in a place where we could freely follow Jesus Christ and worship without fear.

Dr. Jeff Myer: I love that. When my children were younger, I shared with them our family's mission, which is to be a blessing to the nations of the earth. God has not given us the opportunity to be Americans just by accident, as you said. There are certain things about ourselves we can't change, where we were born, what race we are, how many siblings we have, who those siblings are, our gender, all of those things have been given to us as a blessing from God, not just so that we can live more prosperously, but so that we can in turn be a blessing to others. And when people take on that attitude, I'll tell you one thing, it really helps lower their anxiety. It really helps lower their levels of depression and confusion and fear about what is happening in society, because they say, you know what? I don't have to make a decision today that's going to save the entire world. I just do one thing right. And then every day I try to do one more thing right. And over time, you build a really great life that's outward focused, not inward focused.

Gary Bauer: Dr. Myers, I don't know if over time your outlook might have changed on this. I mean, it's men and women of faith were called obviously to be optimistic because we know the end of the story and that's a great comfort. But on a more short-term basis, and in this particular place we find ourselves in, would you say you're optimistic or pessimistic about America's ability to get through all of this and be restored as what the founders called a shining city upon a hill.

Dr. Jeff Myers: Well, a pessimist is a person who says "It can't possibly get any worse." An optimist says, "Oh, yes, it can." So I like the term hope more than I like the term optimism because I'm trying to be realistic about the challenges that we actually face. But hope is an eternal thing. Hope is a deposit that God has given to us from eternity to live in the world that we're a part of. And Scripture says that because of God's great mercy, He has given us a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. I hold to that, I teach that to students and I find that that is the lifeline that really helps them. But it always is going to go back to, well, there are a lot of people who are listening to the show right now, what are we going to do differently? Are we going to engage with our families differently, with our children? Are we going to learn how to stand for what we know is true? And if we make those everyday steps, it's a process of one day at a time. And today is day one, not tomorrow, not next week, not next year.

Gary Bauer: Dr. Myers, it's been great to spend this time with you. I know our audience is really enjoying this show. And I know that Dr. Dobson and Shirley will love hearing it too. You all share the same heart for American young people and for this great country and for the gospel of Jesus Christ. So, thank you for being part of family talk as we continue to do everything we can at the James Dobson Family Institute to promote faith, family, and freedom. Let's close by taking one more shot at this and in case there's somebody out there that doesn't know about your work, how can they find out more about you and where would they go and what's coming up that might be encouraging for them to present themselves.

Dr. Jeff Myers: Yes, Summit Ministry equips and supports the rising generation to embrace God's truth and champion a biblical worldview. And we wanna come alongside the families of those who are listening right now. Just go to summit.org and you can find out how to get in touch with us. If you're looking for a program this summer for young men, all of our seats and all of our programs are full except for in Lookout Mountain Georgia. We do have some seats left open for young men 16 to 22 years of age. We also have a virtual program. That's for young people who are 13 and up, so a little bit broader of an audience. And I can promise you; it'll be the most fascinating week of their summer that it'll be fun and energizing and they will grow in their faith.

Gary Bauer: That's wonderful, Dr. Myers. Thanks again for being part of our show today and sharing the wonderful work of your ministry, God bless you and Summit Ministries, and thank all of you for tuning in to Family Talk. Be with us every day until we talk again. God bless.

Roger Marsh: Well Generation Z may face unprecedented challenges, but when young people discover their God-given purpose, transformation follows. You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and a conversation featuring Gary Bauer our senior vice president of public policy here at the James Dobson Family Institute and Gary's special guest, Dr. Jeff Myers, president of Summit Ministries. Now to hear today's program again, or to learn more about Dr. Myers book called *Truth Changes Everything*, go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

You know, every day here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we are fighting to preserve the institution of the family and the biblical principles upon which it's built. In a culture where traditional values are increasingly challenged, your financial partnership ensures that families receive the guidance and encouragement they desperately need. Right now, through a special June matching grant, your gift will have double the impact. Your \$1,000 donation becomes \$2,000; your \$5,000 donation becomes \$10,000. Some generous partners have stepped forward with an extraordinary opportunity and because of their generosity, every gift we receive now through the end of the month will be matched dollar for dollar. Now this is your chance to multiply your impact in strengthening marriages, equipping parents, and introducing more people to the gospel of Jesus Christ. You can make a tax-deductible donation through our secure website at drjamesdobson.org. You can also write to us. Our ministry

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Well I'm Roger Marsh and on behalf of Dr. James 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.