



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Living as Salt and Light – Part 1

**Guest(s):** Bob Vander Plaats

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Announcer: Today, on Family Talk:

Dr. Dobson: Well, hello everyone, you're listening to Family Talk, which is a division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson thanking you for joining us today. We're always mindful of the fact that you could be doing something else and you have chosen to be with us and we appreciate it. I've been on the radio for 42 years, talking about issues that are critical to the family, not only the how-tos of parents, but what's going on in the culture. And I think you agree with me that over the past decade, we've witnessed a nation whose moral underpinnings have been sliding away from its Judeo Christian roots. Even the most casual observer can see that there is a struggle going on for America's soul. And we're going to talk about that today on this issue of Family Talk, and our subject again is not politics.

We're never going to try to tell you how to vote here. We wouldn't if we could, and it is important to understand that we're going to be talking about spiritual warfare, as I just mentioned, the Judeo Christian system of values and what's happening to it, the welfare of the Church and its mission, and the integrity of the institution of the family. And I'll tell you personally and from my heart, there's no one in America whom I would most want to be here for this discussion, than Bob Vander Plaats. Bob is the president and CEO of the Family Leader, based in Iowa. This is a family policy group and as you can imagine, Bob is dedicated to strengthening families by urging Christ-like lifestyles in the home, the Church and government. Bob Vander Plaats, welcome back to Family Talk.

Bob Vander Plaats: What an honor to be with you. My only regret is, Dr. Dobson, that Darla is not with me today.

Dr. Dobson: I kind of thought you'd bring her. You did last time. In fact, the topic for our program last time was your son, Lucas, your third son, who is severely disabled. You've written a book about Lucas. Why don't we start by you bringing us up to date on what we talked about the last time you were here.

Bob Vander Plaats: Well Lucas, first of all, he, he's a young man who was born with a very rare brain disorder and it left him significantly disabled. He can't walk, can't talk, a major seizure disorder, a lot of times his life hangs in the balance.

Dr. Dobson: How old is he now?

Bob Vander Plaats: Well that's what I wanted to tell you. He wasn't supposed to live for two days, and then not for two weeks, and then not for two years, and today all praise to God, he is 26 years old.

Dr. Dobson: Really.

Bob Vander Plaats: Lucas changed the career path of my life. I was a teacher, I was a coach, I was a high school principal. Education is what I was going to do the rest of my life. Then in came Lucas, and after we had to deal with Lucas, God led me to lead and to serve a place serving people with disabilities, brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, young people with disabilities, and it was through that where I got asked to chair a governor's council for Governor Terry Branstad of Iowa, and I got to see the inner workings of government and I thought, "Boy, this place needs leadership from the outside, not the inside." So that directed my career path where I actually ended up running for governor, and then which, after I lost, that's why I'm here.

Dr. Dobson: You narrowly lost that too, didn't you.

Bob Vander Plaats: Yeah, nearly lost a very close race.

Dr. Dobson: That's one of the big disappointments. When I think of you, I think of that, how your world would have changed, and yet I think the Lord had another plan for you.

Bob Vander Plaats: Oh, He did. As a matter of fact right away, I told Darla, "God is sovereign." And many times, Dr. Dobson, pastors will introduce me before I speak at a pro-life something, and they'll say, "You know, I've never worked so hard for a guy to be governor than I did for this guy, Bob Vander Plaats." Then they stop and they say, "But I'm glad he lost, because what God has him doing, we believe is more important than even being Governor of Iowa." And we're thrilled to have the Governor in Iowa we have today, Governor Kim Reynolds, who is doing a fantastic job, but that really led me to being the president and CEO of The Family Leader. Or how to work with churches, how to work with government, how to work with families.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah, but put some more flesh on those bones. Why did you start this organization and what motivated, and explain what your primary mission is today.

Bob Vander Plaats: Well, first of all, our primary mission is to strengthen families, as you mentioned earlier, by inspiring Christ-like leadership. In the home, in the church, in the government, God's three institutions. Really, this was started by you. This was your vision 30 years ago, that there'd be state policy centers in every state, advocating for God's righteousness in the public square, because we do believe that America that honors God will bless people. So, after I lost the governor's race, Chuck Hurley, who was the president at that time, he came up to me and said, "Would you be interested in taking this over and you lead this and let me be your wing man?" So, Chuck and I have been a good team, but what really got Darla and I interested is, we believe government is an institution of God and it's blessed when we have ministers of God serving in government as elected officials.

Dr. Dobson: Now that simple statement that you just made there, points to the Church's confusion about that role. They think politics is dirty and it is. In fact, I think it's dirtier now than it's ever been.

Bob Vander Plaats: Sure.

Dr. Dobson: And they don't want anything to do with it and they also believe in the separation of Church and state.

Bob Vander Plaats: Which is a fallacy.

Dr. Dobson: Which is a fallacy. They think that it means that the government should be protected from the Church. It's the other way around, and as a result it has not played much of a role or as much a role as it should have. Talk about that. I wish everybody understood that.

Bob Vander Plaats: Well, you're exactly right. As a matter of fact, a very large donor to my governor's race and campaign, he said he was removing himself from campaigns until the Church woke up and got involved, because he saw the Church as being key and pivotal, even back in 2010 already. So what we've done is we've looked into the mirror, you'll recall this. 2012, the election didn't go well for us who share a Judeo Christian worldview at all.

Dr. Dobson: That's right.

Bob Vander Plaats: Same sex marriage was voted in, in a couple of states. Marijuana got passed in a couple of states, and I remember being in your office just a few days after that. And I said to you, I was with Darla, and I said, "Now what do we do?" And you looked back at me and you said, "That was my question of you. What now do we do?"

Dr. Dobson: Yeah.

Bob Vander Plaats: And we took that to heart, so we really looked ourselves in the mirror and we said, we need the Church to engage, but not just for a candidate and not just for a political party. We need to inspire the Church to engage the institution of government for the advancement of God's Kingdom. This is about the Gospel. So what we want to do is we want to team with the Church in its mission, the great commission, because we're all part of the harvest field. "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few, so cry out to a Lord of the harvest, 'send more laborers.'"

So, what we've done, is we've said, is that we want to open it up again for conversation with the Church and say, "We want you to see government as an institution of God and its role is to pursue justice and righteousness, and how does it pursue justice and righteousness without the Church of Jesus Christ?"

Dr. Dobson: Well, I wish everybody understood that, because the future of this country depends on the Church understanding what you just said. You've met with hundreds of pastors. I'll bet you have not tried to tell one of them how to vote.

Bob Vander Plaats: We haven't, not at all. So what we've done, Dr. Dobson is we've explained to them about shepherd to shepherd. The shepherds of God's Church, which are the pastors, to the shepherds of God's government, which are the elected officials. And we bring them back, this would be like Nathan to David. Nathan speaking into David's life. Nathan being able to want to call out David to say, "You're the man," and then David repented. But the reason Nathan was able to have that conversation with David is because he had a relationship with David, and he was representing God. He was being a prophetic voice of God to David.

Bob Vander Plaats: Well, that's what we want the pastors to do to their elected officials. Build a relationship, make sure it's authentic and genuine, but then speak into the issues of the day from a biblical perspective, so the shepherds of God's government can do their job to the best of their capability as a minister of God. And when the pastors have come into the Capitol and they've been doing this, their eyes have just opened up. They've opened up like, "Yes, we have a voice here, and we have a voice for righteous policy," and then they also see, which I think is really neat, they see the need to elect ministers of God, men and women who will carry out the precepts that God would have them carry out.

Dr. Dobson: Bob, I've been giving a lot of thought to this very issue, because it is so important that we understand that there are biblical principles at stake in the culture now, that only government can deal with, or will deal with, and it's not a matter of politics. I hate it when people confuse the biblical understanding of righteousness and truth in the culture with the word politics as such. I've been accused of being too involved in politics for many years, but it is not to go out there and get people elected. It is because of the issues that are at stake. And I sat down the other day and I wrote what I considered to be the top 10 issues.

So, when we talk to people about the next election coming up, think of it in terms of these 10 issues. I could have listed 50 or maybe a hundred.

Bob Vander Plaats: Oh sure.

Dr. Dobson: But I put down what I consider to be the top 10 that ought to be considered when we're thinking about the future of this nation. Here they are.

Dr. Dobson: Number one is religious liberty, that's at stake. That's in the hands of the courts, which is an arm of government, one of the three branches of government. So when we talk about who we put in power, we have to think in terms of its implications for religious liberty.

Bob Vander Plaats: For the Gospel to go forth.

Dr. Dobson: For the Gospel, yes. All right, the second one, of course, is the sanctity of human life, dealing with human beings from birth through natural death. That includes infanticide, it includes euthanasia, it includes abortion, it includes human life at all ages. That should not be determined by government alone. It should be determined by people of faith and they should get their answers from biblical principles. Okay, that's the second one.

The third, now all of these are logical. I think people will probably have the same list. Biblical marriage between a man and a woman as a lifelong commitment. The Church ought to be concerned about that. They have a major stake in that, so that's what we ought to be talking about. Not Democrats and Republicans, but-

Bob Vander Plaats: The Church.

Dr. Dobson: The Church, it is the Church's responsibility. You walk away from that and something changes in the culture for the worst.

Number four, morality and righteousness in the culture. The rest of the biblical principles that are important to us or should be.

Number five, parental rights. The opportunity to raise our kids in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Nobody should tell parents how to do that. That comes from the Scripture. It comes from their commitment to their own kids, and I get really angry when people step into that role and begin telling parents what to do. So that's five.

Number six is very closely related to number five, it is the school curricular, K-12. From my point of view, this one may be of the greatest significance, because it determines the next generation. You turn your back on that one and very quickly the culture changes and you'll never get it back.

Number seven is school choice. What schools do the parents have the right. All of these are connected.

Bob Vander Plaats: You bet they are.

Dr. Dobson: But you know parents have the right to choose the school that they believe most represents what they are trying to do at home. Number eight is the judicial system at all levels. We all know what the courts have done in the past through Roe v. Wade and the other disastrous decisions that have been made, that contradict what the Church believes and what it stands for.

At number nine and one that has come on like gangbusters, is the LGBT agenda, because it is interdicted now into every level of culture. All of them have become battles, and if we don't know that, we're going to lose a lot of things that are critical to us that we can't afford to lose.

And number 10, man there's so many more. Number 10 is medical ethics. There are at least 200 medical ethical issues at stake. The Church should be involved in all 10 of these at an integral level, and that's what you're trying to say to the Church today, is it not?

Bob Vander Plaats: It really is, and you've summed up these 10 really well and as you said, there's many more that we could be adding. What we said, Dr. Dobson, of the Church, and I've said this over and over and over again, is we don't need the Church to be more political, but we need the Church to be biblical and culturally relevant. And what we mean by culturally relevant is when an issue like marriage comes up and what defines marriage, what honors God and marriage, and you see a government saying, "We're going to remove the parameters," what's the Church to say at that point? Where's the Church's voice at that point?

Dr. Dobson: Yeah. I mean, some Churches are saying that gays and lesbians are born that way, born with that inclination as though that negates what the Bible says about the immorality of homosexuality. That's not true, but even if it were, what about the B in LGBTQ, which stands for bisexuality? Is the Church going to say that a person can sleep with anybody and everybody of either sex? Are you kidding me?

Bob Vander Plaats: Right? So, what we're doing with the Daniel Initiatives, we're breaking down these parameters. We're breaking down these barriers, and what we're saying is we need the Church, the pastors, the shepherds of God's Church to build a relationship with the shepherds of God's government and understand that I care about you, I love you, I'll pray with you, I want to know about your family, but I also want to recognize your role as a shepherd of God's government.

Dr. Dobson: Yes.

Bob Vander Plaats: Because you're making big decisions and so I want to open up God's Word. What does God's Word say about marriage? What does God's Word say about the sanctity of human life? Why do we need moral parameters when it comes to researchers who want to push the boundaries way beyond limits? Because we

want to understand the Scriptures and the validity of the Scriptures as it applies to every issue, because the Scriptures will speak to every issue that we face today. So it's not political, it's biblical.

Dr. Dobson: And at the same time, we should be voting.

Bob Vander Plaats: Sure.

Dr. Dobson: You know, and that has political implications, but that's not the issue. The issue is the issue. The issue are these big concerns that we have and another 500 more, all influenced by the vote. I heard the other day, and I don't know if this is accurate, I'm going to have to check this out, that in the last election, not a presidential election-

Bob Vander Plaats: 2018?

Dr. Dobson: 2018, nearly 80% of Christians did not vote. What is taking place in Washington today is directly related to you staying the home on that occasion? That you didn't use your vote with reference to these issues I'm talking about?

Bob Vander Plaats: And that's why with our conversations to the Churches and to the pastors, we tell them, "Don't get tied up into a specific candidate and don't get tied up into a specific party, or maybe not even a specific issue." We tell them, "Think bigger and look higher." This is about the Gospel. This is about the pursuit of His Kingdom and his righteousness and honoring the institution that he gave us. And when you're making a choice as a believer in Jesus about whether you should vote or not, I don't think you have an option. I believe God desires for you to have a voice into the culture in which you live. So therefore what we want to do, yeah we want to elect ministers of God.

What do we also want to do? We want to pursue the righteousness that will bless his people, and when we do that, we start seeing the shepherds of God's Church get involved with the shepherds of God's government, we're seeing things change. Recognizing, yes we need ministers of God. Recognizing, yes we can pursue righteous policy, but also recognizing there are things that the Church should be doing, like foster care, that the government is doing. Or things that the Church could be doing, like setting the addicted free, whether that'd be with drugs, alcohol, pornography, whatever it might be, but the Church should be playing a role in that.

So, when you talk about a public private partnership, this is a great place for the institution of God's Church to work with the institution of God's government, and when that happens - we're seeing it in Iowa like crazy - when that happens, you'll turn a state right side up, and when you can replicate that throughout the country, there's real hope for revival in this country.

Dr. Dobson: Bob, when you're meeting with pastors and you're talking about what we're talking about today, let's say it, they are deeply committed to the Christian faith and to biblical values.

Bob Vander Plaats: You bet.

Dr. Dobson: And you're describing this to them. Do they say to you, "I'm not political, I can't go there?"

Bob Vander Plaats: Some do, and some have a real reluctance. And again, if I look at myself in the mirror, don't look at anybody else in the mirror, but if I look at myself in the mirror, I think too often, early on, I went to the Church and I wanted the Church to be engaged because I needed this candidate to win or I needed this issue to be advanced and the Church pulled back.

Now what I'm saying is we want to go to you and say, "No, no, no, no, we're, we're teammates in the same mission field, in the same harvest field. Elections and policy just happened to be a piece of it." So initially there's no doubt most of them are reluctant, until we get them into the Capitol, until we get them in to see the heart of what we're doing, that this is a ministry that is way bigger than politics. It's way bigger than the Republican or Democrat party. It is way bigger than candidate A or B.

Even with President Trump, who's a big personality, I say it's way bigger than President Trump. You need to think bigger, you need to look higher than this. The Church has a role to play here, and if you want revivals - we pray wanting revival - You can't have revival in the house of the Lord, the Church, and even revival in the family and let government go off and do its own thing. You need to have a voice, this needs to be a systemic revival.

Dr. Dobson: Here's in my words, what you've said a different way. If I had an opportunity to speak directly to the pastors of the nation, first of all, I'd have to answer to the question of, why are you telling us what to do? You're not even a minister, but I would say to them, "If you preach these 10 and many more issues, you don't have to tell people how to vote. You don't have to mention politics. You don't have to talk about Republicans and Democrats and Independents. All you have to do is talk about what's at stake in our country and what the foundation for those issues is, and of course it's the word of God." End of story. There's nothing the IRS can say or it would try to say about that. They can't even begin to tell you how to preach, if you don't try to tell people how to vote.

Bob Vander Plaats: You know, you said it well, really what we're looking for pastors to do is, one is preach Jesus. The Gospel sets men and women free. We don't want to view somebody who opposes our worldview as the enemy. We want to view that person as an opportunity to be reached with the Gospel. And we have story after story after story of a person who changes their life because of what Jesus has done in their life, and He paid the debt for their sin. That's why we celebrate



Christmas. But then if you're all in for Jesus, then Matthew 6:33 says, be all in for His Kingdom and be all in for his righteousness. Then the rest of the stuff will be added unto you. And that includes the institution of government.

So be that prophetic voice, be that Nathan to a David, be that Daniel to a Nebuchadnezzar, and I believe we will experience revival in this country like none other. But when the Church, the remnant of the Church that believes God's inerrancy or the inerrancy of God's word, and that Jesus is the way and not a way. When we team together by looking higher, my help comes from the Lord, not Washington DC. My help comes from the Lord, not from a political candidate. My help comes from the Lord, not from a state government. When we do it that way, the ripple effect will be righteousness that exalts a nation, and you can impact an election while winning a generation.

Dr. Dobson: Bob Vander Plaats, you are a good man, a Godly man, and you're doing the best you can to serve Him in a very effective way. I'm glad to call you my friend. I stand shoulder to shoulder with you. We didn't have a chance to talk about one other thing, and that is the Daniel Initiative. You want to talk about that next time?

Bob Vander Plaats: I'd love to talk about that next time.

Dr. Dobson: Let's give it a go.

Bob Vander Plaats: All right.

Roger Marsh: A powerful call for Christians across the nation to be involved in our society. We have an obligation to challenge the wickedness of culture and to stand for our Judeo Christian virtues. Be sure to join us again tomorrow, as Dr. Dobson continues his interview here on Family Talk with Bob Vander Plaats. He'll describe the history of the family policy councils and how the gospel can transform this world. In the meantime, be sure to go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) for more information about Bob Vander Plaats and The Family Leader. That's [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org), and then tap onto today's broadcast page.

Roger Marsh: Thanks for listening. Hope you'll join us again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Have a blessed day.

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