



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Living for Christ, Whatever the Cost – Part 1

Guest(s): David and Jason Benham

Air Date: March 11, 2024

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Roger Marsh: America was founded on biblical principles, but in recent years, it has become more and more challenging to live out the Christian faith. David and Jason Benham have had front row seats to this cultural shift. They've seen their father ousted from the church pulpit for taking a pro-life position. They've also endured the backlash from mainstream media for their support of traditional Biblical marriage. That stance cost them a nationally broadcast television program.

Psychologist and best-selling author, Dr. James Dobson, welcomes the Benham brothers to the studio for a conversation about living for God, whatever the cost.

Dr. James Dobson: We've got a couple of big dudes here with us in the studio today. I've been looking forward to them being here, and you're going to love getting acquainted with them too. They are David and Jason Benham, and you've probably seen them on television or heard of them. They speak all over the country, and they deeply love the Lord. I want to start with that. You guys grew up in a decidedly Christian home, didn't you?

David Benham: Yes, we did. And, Dr. Dobson, just so you know, this is David. I'm the one that usually starts, because Jason, who's my younger twin brother, is a little afraid to speak up right out of the gate.

Dr. James Dobson: The younger twin.

Jason Benham: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: How much time was there between the two of you?

David Benham: There's two minutes between the two of us.

Dr. James Dobson: You've lorded that over him all the way.

David Benham: I have for almost 42 years now.

Jason Benham: But you know, in the Bible, since you know the Bible so well, the older always ends up serving the younger.

David Benham: He uses that all the time.

Jason Benham: He's older, but...

Dr. James Dobson: Sometimes, he has to cheat to be able to do that.

David Benham: Ooh, nailed you, Jason.

Jason Benham: Okay.

Dr. James Dobson: Does that ring a bell for you?

Jason Benham: I feel the rebuke.

Dr. James Dobson: Jacob and Esau.

Jason Benham: I feel the rebuke.

David Benham: So, we were brought up in a Christian home. As a matter of fact, the night we were born, we were not in a Christian home because our dad was passed out drunk from an all-night poker party in the lobby of the hospital where we were born. Our dad was a saloon owner. And after we were born, six months in, he came home one night drunk, and mom said, "That's it, I'm leaving."

And a coffee salesman had previously come into the saloon and sold him some stuff for coffee, and he invited my dad to church. So my dad said, "Well, this coffee salesman says he's going to pick us up on Sunday and take us to church."

So on that Sunday, he went to church with my mom, got radically saved, and our dad tells his story, that he was stacking the beer cooler for the next six months singing Amazing Grace, witnessing to everybody that bellied up to the bar.

And he knew at that point that he was called into the ministry. He sold the saloon. This was back in 1976. We were born in '75. He sold the saloon in '76, took all the money and paid for seminary at Asbury Theological Seminary. When he graduated seminary, we moved to Dallas, Texas, and started a small church. At that time, we were four years old, so that's how we grew up Christian.

Dr. James Dobson: We had lunch a while back and it was just amazing how many things in common that we have, and one of them is great fathers.

David Benham: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Your dad didn't start out to be a great father, but that's where he went.

Jason Benham: He sure did. And we like to tell people that courage is contagious. Cowardice is contagious, too. There's a lot of fathers that have abandoned their families and that's a cowardly act. But our dad, by God's grace, was not only a pastor, but he was also avidly pro-life at a time when it was pretty unpopular to be pro-life. And he ultimately ended up losing his church because of that. And yet we saw him stand and be faithful.

Dr. James Dobson: Because he was pro-life?

Jason Benham: Well, not just because he was pro-life. He actually began getting involved with pro-life activity out in the streets and those types of things. And it just wasn't a very popular thing. So he had the church-

Dr. James Dobson: What year would that have been?

David Benham: 1991.

Jason Benham: '91. Yeah, he had the church taken from him, but the way he went through that, said, "Boys don't be bitter about anything. God is just leading us in a different direction." And what we learned from that, and our dad taught us that God not only uses the strengths of other people to get you where He wants you to go, but He'll oftentimes use the weaknesses of other people. David and I saw supposedly really good Christians acting in very non-Christian ways during that time. But we learned that God can use even their weaknesses and, yeah, he's going to work on them, but he got us to where he wanted our family to go. And from that point forward, our dad actually took over a monstrous pro-life ministry from that point forward.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, your dad also taught you to love not only Christ, but to love baseball.

David Benham: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Tell us about it?

David Benham: Yeah. Our dad grew up in New York and his favorite team is the dreaded New York Yankees. When Jason and I were born, our dad forced us at the age of five to sign up for little league baseball. Now we started crying. As a matter of fact, I think it was Jason that was crying. I'm sure I wasn't. But he signed us up and he told our mom, he said, "I think these boys have got some talent, but we're going to share the love for baseball together." And he just loved it. He said, "it's America's game." and Jason and I ended up having some talent. Our dad ended up coaching us all the way through high school.

Jason Benham: I remember getting in the backyard when David and I were about 10, and our dad had a bucket of tennis balls with him and we were in our backyard. He told

us to go stand at home plate. And he said, "David, you back away. Jason, grab a bat, stand up there at home plate." And I said, "okay, so you want me to hit these tennis balls?" He's like, "no, I don't want you to swing the bat." And he grabbed the first ball and he reared back and threw 100 mile an hour fastball right at my shoulder and thunk, it hit around his shoulder.

He grabbed the next ball and started wailing on me. And he said, "you stay there in that batter's box." And I'm like, "what are you doing?" And my mom screams out the window. She said, "stop hitting the boys." And he said, "Faye, not right now. I'm teaching these boys that if they can't face their fear in practice, they're never going to face it in a game." But he was training us to face our fear from a very young age. And we learned that. Later on in life when we had to face our fear. Look, just stay in the batter's box.

Dr. James Dobson: That's right. Now he's still a strong believer today?

Jason Benham: Very much so.

David Benham: Yes he is.

Dr. James Dobson: And what's he doing now?

David Benham: We have a small home church in Charlotte, North Carolina, and he's leading that and he's still faithful. We have three abortion clinics in Charlotte, and we have right now, by God's grace, we have about 200 volunteers that every day that the clinics are open, we have sidewalk counseling and mobile ultrasound opportunities for these mothers that think that they have no choice. We have a life network that's set up to give them baby showers or set them up with pro-life doctors. It's really a wonderful life-giving loving ministry.

Dr. James Dobson: You got to bring your dad here.

David Benham: Dad is out there every day the clinic is open. As a matter-

Dr. James Dobson: Would you-

David Benham: Of fact.

Dr. James Dobson: Let me meet him?

David Benham: Oh-

Jason Benham: Yeah. He would be honored to meet you. Trust me. When he used to pick us up from elementary school and we'd get in, Hey dad. He's like, shh, boys, quiet. Dr. Dobson's speaking. And we would sit there listening to you talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Hey, it's not my fault. The Lord call me to do that.

Jason Benham: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I'm so glad to have you here. Now, you went on and made a career out of baseball.

Jason Benham: We did.

Dr. James Dobson: You played baseball at Liberty University?

David Benham: Dr. Falwell was still alive at the time, and so we had the privilege, it was such an honor. All four years we were there Dr. Falwell was there and he would literally, he'd be speaking in California, but he would fly back in the early morning hours Wednesday morning because he never wanted to miss Chapel on Wednesdays. If he could be there he was speaking to the-

Jason Benham: And he was at almost every single home baseball game, at least for a few innings. And what was funny in Virginia, it was real, it's kind of-

David Benham: Hot and humid.

Jason Benham: Humid heat there, and it would be 98, 99 degrees, and he's sitting on the front row in the sun with his suit. His tie's not undone. I mean, the man was always-

David Benham: Dripping with sweat.

Jason Benham: In his suit, dripping with sweat. But yeah, we got to know Dr. Falwell then. And he used to say this from the podium quite often to the students, "if it's Christian, it ought to be better." About a decade later, we were going to have a company that spanned the country and we would actually, that was going to be our motto in our company. If it's Christian, it ought to be better, but-

Dr. James Dobson: Well, now you're really getting ahead of the story.

Jason Benham: I am, I'm getting way ahead. I knew-

David Benham: Good job.

Dr. James Dobson: Because you did play professional baseball.

David Benham: Right?

Dr. James Dobson: You played in the minor leagues?

David Benham: Yes, sir.

Dr. James Dobson: Both of you.

David Benham: So I, David, was drafted by the Red Sox. Jason was drafted by the Orioles, and it was very hard for my dad on the day that I got drafted. He's like, "The Red Sox, are you kidding me? Why couldn't the Yankees have drafted one of my boys?" But we both got drafted and then I ended up, after a year and a half with the Red Sox, I got traded right before the playoffs in '99. Bret Saberhagen with the Sox had gone down with a shoulder injury and the Sox were heading into the playoffs. It had been the first time they were going to the playoffs in a while. So they went and got Kent Mercker from St. Louis who had pitched in the World Series, and the Cardinals requested me and one other minor league player. So that was great for my career. I went to Major League Spring training the next year with Mark McGuire and all these guys. Albert Pujols, his rookie year was the next year-

Dr. James Dobson: Who's been on this program.

David Benham: Oh, yeah. Albert's a wonderful guy. As a matter of fact, when I was... My very first year with the St. Louis Cardinals, they put me in the Fall Instructional League. Well, Albert had just been drafted and they put him in the Fall Instructional League, and we had lockers right across from each other. And I just said, "Hey man, I've got a Bible study." And he's like, "oh yeah, I'll be there." And sure enough, Albert and several others would come to the Bible study consistently. And now their manager, Mike Matheny of the Major League Club in St. Louis, he was just a great mentor of mine back when I was with the Cardinals. But Jason and I, neither one of us made it to the big leagues, though I was in Major League spring training. We never made it to the Major Leagues.

And we learned how when God gives you a dream, when he gives something and places something in you, you go after it with your hands and your feet, with everything that you've got to the best of your ability, but you stay dead to it in your heart. In other words, you pursue it, but you leave the results to God, because our dad used to teach us when we were kids, if you love God for what He gives you, then you'll hate him for what He takes from you.

And when Jason and I never made it to the big leagues, there was a two-year period there where we were 27, 28 years old, where we could have gotten really bitter because we were watching other players that we felt we were better than. Of course you feel you're better than everybody.

Dr. James Dobson: Jason, did that break your heart?

Jason Benham: It did. And David basically just went the spiritual route. I can tell you that I got out of the game voluntarily. David just couldn't hit a curve ball so-

David Benham: That's just not true.

Jason Benham: No. And I was with the Orioles and our dream was always to play professional baseball together on the same team and specifically in a particular stadium that

was in the Texas League, which was a Double-A Stadium in Shreveport, which is where you were born.

Dr. James Dobson: I was.

Jason Benham: Shreveport Captains. We actually have a book that tells a story about that. But I got released by Baltimore just after I broke my leg and thought baseball was just completely over for me. And I remember having broke my leg, laying in a hospital bed knowing I was probably going to get released at some point, having to die to the game exactly what David said, and just allowing the Lord to pivot me in a different direction. That's a hard thing to do when all you know is this dream you've been pursuing.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, there's so many aspects and facets to your lives together, and it's just fascinating talking to you about them. We can't spend too much time on any one story.

David Benham: No, for sure.

Dr. James Dobson: Or we won't get through. Let's go to the Shreveport story in the book that bears that name.

Jason Benham: Well, my brother and I grew up, my dad being the avid baseball fan that he was, we used to take trips from Dallas, Texas where we lived to Atlanta, Georgia to visit family. And every year we'd go up I-20 and we would pass the Shreveport Captain's baseball stadium. It was a Double-A Stadium. We had never even been in a big league stadium. And to us, it was the biggest stadium we'd ever seen. And our dad woke us up one morning, really early as we were driving past about 7:00 in the morning, we were asleep in the back seat of our station wagon. And dad said, "boys, let's pray one day you can make it to the stadium, but let's pray that you can play together in the stadium on the same team." And so he prayed that prayer and we were about, I forget how old-

David Benham: We were young.

Jason Benham: 10 or 11 years old. And then on the way back we prayed the same prayer. And then the next year on our way to Atlanta, we passed it again. Every year we prayed that prayer. Even when David and I were in college going back and forth to Virginia, we would pray that God would one day allow us to play in that stadium together. And it just seemed impossible. And then David got drafted by the Sox. I was drafted by the Orioles. Neither team was in the league where we would be playing in the Texas League, but through God's providence, He got David with the Cardinals. And that was a team that was in the Texas League. And they actually had a four game series that was in Shreveport at the end of the season in 2000. But at that point, I had already been released by the Orioles and was not a baseball player.

David Benham: After a compound fracture of his leg so he had just rehabbed it so he still wasn't at 100%. I mean he was 100% in terms of his physical capabilities, but he wasn't as 100% in terms of what he was able to do before that compound fracture.

Jason Benham: So I had rehabbed myself and I got back into shape, but the Orioles didn't bring me back. And here I was without a job, no baseball, I had nothing going on. And I just told myself, I said, "you know what? I'm just going to drive and see David play some baseball." He was with the Arkansas Travelers at the time, their Double A team for the Cardinals. And so I'm sitting in the stands with him and I actually prayed. I said, "Lord, we had a prayer long ago that one day we get to play on the same team. I pray somehow you'd make that happen." Now I played second base.

David Benham: With eight games left in the season-

Jason Benham: Eight games-

David Benham: He prayed that.

Jason Benham: Left of the season.

David Benham: Sitting in the stands with his flip-flops on.

Jason Benham: I got my flip-flops on, I got my hat on, and I'm just sitting there not knowing what God is doing. The second baseman for David's team slid into second base and sprained his wrist. David goes to his coach the next day and says, "Coach, my brother is sitting in the stands. He plays second base. We've only got seven games left. You ought to consider signing him." The coach didn't say a word.

David Benham: I thought, man, that's just crazy. I can't believe I even stuck my neck out for my brother.

Jason Benham: That's the last thing you're supposed to do, right, is to go say that to one of your coaches. But the next day we got a phone call at the house where we were staying and the manager said, bring your brother in, we're signing him. So I got to play the next three nights in Arkansas, and it was just-

David Benham: I couldn't believe we were on the exact same team. Our coach came in after our last home game. He came in to the locker room and he said, all right everybody, it's great game. Take care of all the interviews you got with the papers and all that kind of stuff. Get here early tomorrow because Shreveport's a long trip.

Jason Benham: We had no idea.

David Benham: I had-

Jason Benham: We had forgotten-

David Benham: I had gotten moved up to the AA so I hadn't looked at the schedule. We had no idea Shreveport was on the schedule.

Jason Benham: We got to play in that stadium together on the exact same team. And I'm sitting there hobbling around, recovering from a broken leg, and I ended up being the runner-up for Texas League Player of the Week.

Dr. James Dobson: No kidding.

David Benham: There's a whole bunch of details that you'll have to get the book and find out-

Jason Benham: I hit like I never hit before but...

Dr. James Dobson: So that's what the book is about?

David Benham: *Miracle in Shreveport* that when you don't know what God is doing in your situation, you can trust that He's behind the scenes putting the pieces of the puzzle together and you can trust Him.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, how'd you get into real estate?

David Benham: When we got out of baseball, we didn't know what we were going to do. We studied history at Liberty University because we're big history buffs. We didn't know we were entrepreneurs, but we had been reading through the Scripture. And so we were armed with the principles of God's Word. We decided to get our real estate licenses just because hey, we wanted to save the commission on our first house when we bought it. And we had young families at the time. I had two kids, Jason had one kid at the time. And so we just did any odd job we could while we were trying to get this real estate company off the ground. But we were applying biblical principles. And the next thing you know, seven years later, we had 100 offices across 35 states. It just exploded. And as a matter of fact, before Alan Colmes passed away, he asked my brother and I to be on his show in New York City.

We're sitting there in New York City and he said, "let me get this straight. You and your brother built a franchise with 100 offices and you have no business training." And we said, "you're exactly right." And he says, "and you say in your book that you did it all based on the Bible." And we said, "Alan, that is exactly right." And he goes, "I just can't believe that." But it's true. We exercised the principles of God's word and realized that you know what God's truth is, truth, no matter where you are. And in the marketplace, we saw it really works.

Jason Benham: And that's what attracted HGTV.

Dr. James Dobson: Okay, explain what HGTV is?

Jason Benham: Home and Garden Television. I mean they're one of the biggest networks.

David Benham: Television networks.

Jason Benham: Yeah, television networks out there. And they approached us, actually a production company in 2012. This was after my brother and I... We had began opening up other businesses. We actually opened up a company in the Philippines. We had heard in 2010 that 600 families a month were coming off of the mission field for a lack of Western funding. So David and I said, we're going to do something about that. So we started a company over in the Philippines in 2010. It's since grown to 500 employees, but it's just pumping out and creating jobs over there in the Philippines. And it spawned into several other businesses over there in the Philippines, but it's all with a mission's heart, totally non-profit. And a production company heard about all the stuff we've done in business, our professional background that our wives homeschool our kids. We lived on the same street and that we had real estate experience.

David Benham: And now I have five kids and Jason has four. So we had nine kids between the two of us.

Jason Benham: So they said you guys would make for great reality TV. And they made a little video about David and I, took it to Hollywood and five networks wanted us. TLC made us our first offer, but then HGTV came in and offered us a full season with no pilot and a big contract, a four-year deal. And David and I signed with them to start doing a reality show where we would help people flip houses. And we basically take all the principles that we had, pour it into us and David and I... We even told HGTV, "you got to know that for us to take credit for building a successful business is like a shovel, taking credit for digging a hole. We're just the tools that God chose to get it done. And so long as we do what God tells us to do, then however He sees fit, we'll be successful." And HG loved that. They're like, "oh, that's so cool. Now we can't talk about God."

Dr. James Dobson: You actually told them?

Jason Benham: Oh, yes.

David Benham: Oh yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: About your faith?

Jason Benham: That's right. They knew everything.

David Benham: They were very aware of our faith. And they were also very aware of who our dad was, Flip Benham, who, if I reverse for just a minute, when we were kids, he put his office next to the busiest abortion clinic in Dallas, Texas. And one of the employees was Jane Roe, *Roe v. Wade*. Her name was Norma McCorvey, who's since gone on to be with the Lord. Well, he befriended her and in her book, *Won by Love* with Thomas Nelson, she said that it was over a two-year period of time where she really got to see Flip Benham and the way that he would interact

with people, and that he was a loving man and she ended up giving her heart to Jesus and then he baptized her, and that's...He was on the cover of-

Dr. James Dobson: That's history.

David Benham: Magazines.

Dr. James Dobson: Today.

David Benham: Oh yeah. It was history. And so anyway, HG knew all these things about us. They still wanted to sign us and even before they signed us, their business department... They've got all these attorneys. They said, "Hey, are you and your brother anti-gay?" We were like, "what makes you say that?" Because they read some of these articles that, oh, the Benhams are this or the Benhams are that when nothing could be further from the truth. And we simply responded to them, "we're not anti-anything, we're pro Jesus and we believe that God's boundaries are what lead to God's blessings." And so through the course of several conversations and then over a few months, HGTV is just vetting us. They flew out to meet us. They wanted us to go in and meet with them. So we met with them and they said, "you know what? We believe this show is going to be significant."

So we signed with HG and they called the show, "Flip It Forward," and this is in the spring of 2013 now. So all 2013 we start doing some pre-production. And then in the spring of 2014, we actually started filming. It was a 10-week film shoot. We were doing six one-hour episodes. Well, in the middle of the filming, once they started putting the print media out, once our faces started getting on commercials and all of this, that's when GLAAD and Right Wing Watch and various other activist groups reached out to HG and said, "don't you know who these Benhams are? Their dad is Flip Benham and these brothers, they're anti women" and all this because we have a pro-life ministry in our city. And HG fought for us. They did everything that they could to fight for us. And for a week's time, HG was calling us and saying, "guys, don't worry about this. Everything's going to be great with your show."

Now we're five weeks into filming, and then one night we get a call from the highest executive at the network and she said, you're going to be stars on the show. We're calling GLAAD and we're going to let them know that we are not letting you guys go.

Jason Benham: That didn't work out too well because David and I woke up the next morning to texts on our phones at about 6:00 and 6:30 in the morning saying, "Hey, have you seen HGTV's Facebook page?" And we said, "No." So we went on their Facebook page and all it said was one line, "we are reviewing the Benham Brothers Show." And below it were all these comments from people talking about how bad we were. And some of them had linked to a particular story that an organization, I think that's pretty fond of you called, Right Wing Watch had

written an article on my brother and I saying how we were anti all of these things.

Of course none of that was true. But when they found out HG was going to stick with us, then GLAAD, of course, goes to Right Wing Watch, they wrote this article and they basically introduced the Benham brothers to the viewer base of HGTV as these anti all this. And so HG thought the sky was falling in and we felt so bad for them. They got pushed into this. And they called us about 11 o'clock that day, said, "boys, we have to cancel the show." And that was it. All we said was, "thank you. Thanks for believing in us. We know you believed in us, but you got bullied into this and we've got no intentions of backing down to that bully."

Dr. James Dobson: And that was the beginning of a very strange saga that you found yourself in the midst of. GLAAD heard about how influential you were becoming and was alarmed by it. GLAAD being, those are the letters for...

Jason Benham: It's Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation. That's what it stands for.

Dr. James Dobson: They fight for all the gay causes.

Jason Benham: Yes.

David Benham: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, HGTV loved you. They did not want to dismiss you.

Jason Benham: No.

Dr. James Dobson: But they were getting a lot of pressure from-

David Benham: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: GLAAD and others?

David Benham: Behind closed doors we were talking with HG and they said, these groups are coming after us. And a lot of the folks at HG and our production company and our agents, and I mean all over America, believe just like we do, that's not hateful. It's not bigoted or intolerant, but that's the narrative that is now created so-

Dr. James Dobson: You guys we're just getting started here and we're out of time, so we're going to have to pick it up next time right here with this story because it is really dramatic what takes place next. So be with us. Okay?

David Benham: You got it.

Jason Benham: You got it.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. Appreciate you. I know you love the Lord and it's evident in everything you do, and I want to say to our listeners out there, get to know these guys because they're on your team. If you love the Lord, they're on your team. We're going to talk more about it next time.

David Benham: Thank you very much.

Jason Benham: Yeah, we're so glad to be here.

Roger Marsh: Well, David and Jason have certainly continued to serve the Lord despite what might seem to huge setbacks. God is sure moving in the lives of the Benham Brothers. And if you've been encouraged by this classic conversation with our own Dr. James Dobson, be sure to tune in again tomorrow for part two of this program. By the way, if you'd like to listen to today's broadcast, once again, simply visit drjamesdobson.org/familytalk or listen on your smartphone using the Family Talk JDFI app.

While you're on our website, remember, you can also learn more about the Benham brothers and their book about what they experienced during that time that they were shooting episodes for their HGTV series. The book is entitled, *Whatever The Cost: Facing Your Fears, Dying To Your Dreams and Living Powerfully*. You'll find that information at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And keep in mind, we have a brand new resource to share with you designed to reach the next generation of families.

Dr. James Dobson Family Institute has remastered Dr. Dobson's biblically-based transforming truths into some powerful 60 second audio messages. The brand new Dr. Dobson Minute will provide young families with practical insights that will strengthen marriages and help build better parenting skills. If you'd like to listen to a sample, you can do so right now. Just go to drdobsonminute.org, that's drdobsonminute.org. And by the way, with Mother's Day coming up, keep in mind that the role that women have in our world is incredibly important. And that's why the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute has partnered with Dr. Owen Strachan to encourage moms, wives, sisters and daughters in affirming what God's design for women really is in a brand new PDF called "What Is a Woman, According to God?" You can download this free resource when you go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk, that's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. I'm Roger Marsh, and you've been listening to Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

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