



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Setting a Moral Compass – Part 2

Guest(s): Dr. Bill Bennett

Air Date: October 29, 2020

[Listen to the broadcast](#)

Dr. Dobson: Ethics, morality, and laws are very difficult to enforce when they're not built on a strong foundation. Society would tell us that group think or moral relativism is the best way forward. But as believers, we know that God is the ultimate law giver. He is the definer of right and wrong, and his authority provides us with the standards to live by.

Welcome to Family Talk, which is a division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and in a moment we're going to continue my classic conversation on this topic with Dr. Bill Bennett. This was recorded in the mid 1990s, and it is still very relevant to today.

Last time, you heard us examine the first part of this discussion on immorality in the culture at that time, specifically in the music and entertainment industry. Well, as you know, it's far more perverse and immoral today. Today, you're going to hear the question and answer session that followed our formal interview.

Before we get to that, though, let me tell you more about Dr. Bennett. He's a best-selling author, a respected political commentator, and a dedicated man of God. He previously served as President Ronald Reagan's Secretary of Education, and after successfully finishing that assignment, Dr. Bennett worked as President George Herbert Walker Bush's drug control policy czar. Dr. Bennett holds a bachelor's degree and a PhD from the University of Texas and a juris doctorate from Harvard. The daily radio program he hosted for Salem Radio Network was heard by millions of people, and I was one of them. Now, Dr. Bennett has his own podcast called The Bill Bennett Show.

The content we discussed last time and we'll continue today is for mature audiences. Parental discretion is strongly advised. With that, here's part two of my interview with Dr. Bill Bennett.

Dr. Dobson: All right. Give us your name. Where are you from?

Jeannie Crooks: Hi, my name is Jeannie Crooks. First, let me say that I am a great admirer of yours and also that my daughter and I often curl up in bed at night with *The*

Book of Virtues. We really appreciate your work on that. I'd like to ask you a question just to see what your response would be to those who say, are we approaching this cultural problem from the wrong angle? What if we were to approach it from a point of view of convincing parents and children not to buy this stuff at all? After all, it's the corporate executives who typically say, "Well, the reason we produce it is because people buy it. They want it. We're just making what they want." What would be your response to this criticism that we might sometimes see in correspondence?

Dr. Bill Bennett: Well, you're absolutely right. That's part of the response it seems to me is to urge people not to buy it. Again, I think this was part of this was a public education campaign. Most parents I think had no idea that this is what is involved in these lyrics. When seeing it, I think a number of them took action.

But remember, there are a lot of kids out there with spending money of their own who do not have to respond to their parents, who go out and buy things. Parents don't check. You can hide CDs pretty easily. Parents are busy. Kids are unregulated. This again is a very different aspect of the culture. Because of technology, because of freedom, because of mobility, because of affluence, young people can now be communicated with directly by people who we have never let into our house. We have never approved. We have never said, "This is a good person for you to be with." Without any say of our own.

A young person wrote me a letter the other day and said, "You should ask people, if someone came to your door and they disagreed with you on everything, and especially on the whole question of values and virtues and so on, would you let them spend three hours a day with your child?" You say, well, the answer is, "of course not." "Well, then why do you let them sit in front of the TV, go to the movies, buy the CDs, and so on."

Dr. Dobson: Good point.

Dr. Bill Bennett: It's a very good point. I think you're right. That's part of it. The other thing though, is to get these folks to stop making it. Because the point I made about *The Book of Virtues* is, Jim, they said ... one guy said about *The Book of Virtues*, he said, "800 pages, no sex, no pictures, a lot of moralizing." I said, "Yeah, well that's sort of what it's about."

Dr. Dobson: Never sell, right?

Dr. Bill Bennett: Not a chance. This won't sell. Well, as a matter of fact, it will. James Dobson actually sells books. People listen to him. If we appeal to the lower angels of people's nature, that's what they'll indulge. If we appeal to the better angels of their nature, as Lincoln said, they may indulge those. We have to lift it up, I mean not just spiritually. We have to lift up the level at which we talk to young people, at which we appeal to them.

Dr. Dobson: Yesterday, Bill, you made reference to a journalist, John Leo, in US News and World Report. You remember quoting him?

Dr. Bill Bennett: Yeah, yeah.

Dr. Dobson: I just happened to have a quote with me here from him. He said, quote, "Like a junkie quivering toward a fix, Time-Warner simply can't resist cashing in on the amoral singers who work tirelessly to tear the culture apart, glorifying brutality and violence and the most hateful attitudes toward women." Do we have to sit and take that?

Dr. Bill Bennett: No, we don't. We don't have to sit and take it. We shouldn't. This was a little bit of what we were saying is we're sick and tired and we're not going to take it anymore. We were waiting for the women's groups to join us, but we didn't get any.

Dr. Dobson: You didn't hear them.

Dr. Bill Bennett: This was so extraordinary. I mean, in all this horrible music, it's all encouraging violence. A lot of it is encouraging torture, mutilation as you mentioned, other things. 80, 90% of this music, when you take the worst of it, encourages the worst kind of human behavior, torture, death, mutilation. 95% of the victims in this music are women. It is encouraging men to be violent to women.

Now, where are the people who are interested in legislation about battered wives, and spousal abuse, and the national organization for women? Where are they on this-

Dr. Dobson: Very good question.

Dr. Bill Bennett: On this issue? Because let me ask you a question. In terms of effect on young boys, I mean, I remember my Play-Doh. Music gets inside the soul and it can have much more power than a lecture or a bit of instruction. In terms of the sensibilities of young men, this stuff is powerful, is it not?

Dr. Dobson: Let me, without getting too academic, let me refer to what's called social learning theory where you can learn different behavior. You can learn bad behavior. Especially in early adolescents at 11, 12, and 13 for boys who typically are excited about the female body, about a cheerleader type image, it is not very difficult at that time to reorder that to associate that excitation with hurting women.

Somebody like Ted Bundy, who at that time stumbles onto or sees in a drug store or what have you photographs of women tied up. Young boys have access to that kind of imagery, and they begin to associate sexual excitement with pain, and you set a lifelong pattern. We're just producing kids that grow up to be abusers.

I don't know where the feminists and all those who claim to be so concerned about what's happening to women today.

Dr. Bill Bennett: Exactly.

Dr. Dobson: I am concerned about it. When I served on the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, primarily what I saw was abuse of women and not healthy sex. All of that kind of horrible stuff is out there, and now it's on the internet for kids to see. It's a disaster in the making.

Dr. Bill Bennett: Is this where the sexual revolution ends up?

Dr. Dobson: I'm afraid it does.

Dr. Bill Bennett: Interesting.

Dr. Dobson: That, and AIDS, and unwanted pregnancies-

Dr. Bill Bennett: Right, right, right.

Dr. Dobson: And abortion, and all the rest of it, sexually transmitted diseases. Next question.

Jim DeKorne: Hi. Jim DeKorne. I'm a high school teacher here in Colorado Springs. As a teacher, I've heard many, many times from parents as I've talked to them about music and about videos and about our culture and so on, from parents who basically grew up in the 60s. Those are the families that have high school age children now. Pretty much the response is, "Yes, our music and our stuff was abrasive to our parents too. This stuff I'm hearing you say, 'Yes, that's real abrasive, and it's bad,' but you're sounding just like our parents." How do you respond to let them know that this may be fundamentally different than what was happening, but maybe it's not?

Dr. Bill Bennett: Parents were offended by, and I can understand it being a father now, by Elvis Presley saying, "I want you. I need you. I love you." But, "I want you. I need you. I love you," is a far cry from, "I hate you. I'll torture you. I'll mutilate you. I'll kill you." Anybody who equates the two, somebody doesn't know the difference between civilization and barbarism.

Jim, I'm reading ... I was trained as a philosopher and then I had jobs, education and drugs czar. Criminal law is a big area of interest to me. But now I'm reading a lot in two areas mainly, religion, faith and cultural anthropology. I don't think societies can survive if this is what the children are learning.

Dr. Dobson: I don't either.

Dr. Bill Bennett: I mean, I think this is nihilism. This is. People want to say, "What is nihilism?" That's nihilism. My sense in the future, and this affects politics, and I'm engaged

in politics in Washington and other things, there is going to be another sort of titanic struggle. It won't be traditional values people versus other values people. It will be the people who believe in right and wrong versus the people who believe in nothing, believe in nothing but expression and pleasure. Because this is - if you can't get off the boat with this stuff, I mean I just think we either put it into this or we're going. We're going. We're done as a civilization.

Dr. Dobson: In you're reading in the field of cultural anthropology, where in history has this occurred before and what happened?

Dr. Bill Bennett: It has occurred, interestingly, it has occurred in every society, this sort of thing, but it's where it occurred. It occurred in a back alley. It occurred in the underground. It occurred in the worst part of town in Dickens, London. It never occurs in the mainstream.

Dr. Dobson: Well, Romans 1 describes a culture which got that way. I don't know who he was referring to. I guess the Romans.

Dr. Bill Bennett: No. I mean when it gets into the mainstream, the culture is dead.

Dr. Dobson: Then it's gone.

Dr. Bill Bennett: Then it's gone. But a culture can survive with some of this at the fringe. It's like the drug problem. Can America survive a 100,000 cocaine addicts? Yes. Can it survive 5 million? Probably not.

John Leo had another nice phrase. "It's not that this music is being written and produced by somebody." he said, "It's in the air ducts. It's out there."

The two other ... Can I mention two other things in cultural anthropology?

Dr. Dobson: Sure.

Dr. Bill Bennett: I know you know this one, but it was very striking. One is never before in the history of the world has any society tried to survive with single motherhood as the norm, or even with single motherhood as a significant percentage of the population. There's no precedent for what we are doing now, the destruction of the family, that I know of in a society that's survived.

Second, as I read this anthropology, I picked up this other point, which is that we have in many places in America become the kind of society that civilized Christian countries in the 19th century used to send missionaries to. If you describe what's going on in some of our communities today, getting a report on that in London in the 19th century would have had the good guys sending missionaries. This is what's happened to part of the greatest country on God's Earth.

Dr. Dobson: Can you imagine a father from 1850 being told that a day would come when he would send his 13 year old girl off to school and that while she was there, without his knowledge or consent, she could be taught things that totally contradicted his Christian faith and that if she got pregnant, she could be transported to an abortion clinic and go through that procedure and come home at night and he never be told about it? Somebody would have been shot.

Dr. Bill Bennett: That's right. That's right.

Dr. Dobson: I mean, he would have risen up to defend his family.

Dr. Bill Bennett: That's right.

Dr. Dobson: Why do parents not defend their families today? I don't understand it.

Dr. Bill Bennett: I don't know. I don't know.

Dr. Dobson: We've become so numb to it-

Dr. Bill Bennett: I know.

Dr. Dobson: That we just kind of feel overwhelmed.

Dr. Bill Bennett: It's cooking.

Dr. Dobson: Like people in a totalitarian country, they just get to the point where they're demoralized. Next question.

Walt Boost: Hi. Walt Boost from Parker, Colorado. I'm a 1972 graduate of the Naval Academy, and one of the things that we had to memorize during Plebe Summer amongst 25,000 other things was the mission of the Naval Academy, which begins, "To develop young men," now women also, "Young men physically, morally, and mentally to serve their country."

When you spoke about going to see the superintendent of the Air Force Academy and this discussion about how do you teach morals in today's society, I don't even know if this is part of the program anymore to tell you the truth. I know that going to chapel was a mandatory event for us. But I guess the point is when the government just completely extricates this dimension out of the education and they wonder then how can you teach these things to these young men, I guess I don't see what the question is.

Dr. Bill Bennett: Well, I expect ... I'm on my way there. I expect that we will see a group of young men and women and a faculty of men and women who are themselves individually, I would expect in very large numbers probably deeply committed people. I can't imagine that most of the wing, the Air Force Academy, is not

made up of very impressive young men and women. I look forward to meeting with them.

I think it's just unfortunate that in a line of Supreme Court decisions that are frankly incoherent, we have decided that things pertaining to the most important issues of all, ultimate meaning and significance and salvation, cannot be addressed. I think it's not sensible. I don't think it's sensible constitutional interpretation.

I keep going back to Jefferson who was always cited in the wall of separation saying the foundation of all education is, not just at the academies, but all education of all American citizens is intellectual, and moral, and spiritual development. This was understood by the founders and by everyone. I think it's still understood by most Americans.

But look, the academies are under orders. You were in the Naval Academy. You know about orders. Just like a lot of those folks at the Citadel, I'm sure they ... I know they weren't happy following those orders, but I look forward to these conversations.

Dr. Dobson: We were talking earlier about this generation, this younger generation, and where they get their understandings of right and wrong. Bill, for my new book, *Life on the Edge*, we did focus groups. I didn't, but Word Publishers did focus groups all across the country to find out where young people are. One word emerged from all of those discussions as having more significance for them than any other word. Do you know what it was? Meaning.

Dr. Bill Bennett: Meaning,.

Dr. Dobson: More than anything else, they're looking for meaning. It's not something that we wanted to impose on them. It was something they were desperate for.

Dr. Bill Bennett: There's a wonderful line, and I can't remember who said it, but when I was doing my work on family and illegitimacy, one of the articles I read said, "Little boys want to be men, but they don't know how. They need examples. They need to be shown what it means. They want to know what it means to be a man."

I remember as a former teacher of freshmen in college, I used to get the freshman philosophy course. I volunteered for it. The other professors wanted the graduate seminar with three students. I wanted the freshmen, because that was the most fun. That's when they came in and said, "Who am I? Where am I going? What's it all about? What is meaning?"

I'm very encouraged by what you say, because that was ... if that's something that's not changing from generation to generation, then we have a real advantage, because the kinds of things that you talk about and write about, the

kinds of things that other, my colleagues and friends, people I admire talk about and write about truly do point kids to a source of meaning, which will satisfy, and the other stuff won't.

But in the interim, delivered to their door, this music, these movies, this TV. They take that as the meaning. I think another qualitative difference in life today is the mistakes kids can make now. So many more of them, it's so much harder to recover from.

I remember talking to kids who were in the drug traffic in New York, Covenant House, living on the streets saying, "I hope when I get out, I'll have a year, a year and a half before somebody blows me away."

George Bush called me on the telephone. I was in North Carolina at the beach, and he called me up. He had just talked to a young man who said, "I hope I can live another six months when I get out and have some fun with my life." That was the life perspective.

This has happened because, well, I guess in the final analysis, some people who weren't thinking or were wicked or evil have decided they were going to sell this bill of goods to kids. But I think it's largely happened because we haven't paid enough attention.

Dr. Dobson: You remember about a-

Dr. Bill Bennett: We haven't resisted it.

Dr. Dobson: About a month ago in Los Angeles, this little family just driving along in their car and made a wrong turn and went into a dead end street and were surrounded by gang members. The father turned around, tried to drive out very fast, and they just poured shells into that car. Killed a little four year old girl, shot another child in the foot, and shot the father in the back. What kind of culture-

Dr. Bill Bennett: That's right.

Dr. Dobson: Produces those kinds of teenagers that have no anger at that man? There's nothing in particular that would make them kill a family like that, other than this seething hostility at everything.

Dr. Bill Bennett: My friend John DiIulio at Princeton, he's the man I rely on for a lot of statistics and things on crime, tells me ... He's been going visiting the same prisons now for 30 years. He might be someone you want to talk to sometime. It's very interesting. He said that the older life prisoners, the guys who are 30 years old who were in for life, are terrified of these guys who are coming in at 17 and 18 and 19, because the guys at 30 committed their crimes, heinous as they were, in passion because they wanted a lot of money. Said these young guys are stone cold killers. They are conscienceless. Nothing. No one has ever tried to find that

immortal spirit in those children. They have these dead eyes, and they would just as soon kill you as look at you.

Now, we've been conducting a little experiment here in American society, a fairly big one. Supposing we have children and we don't raise them, supposing we don't have fathers around, supposing the mom's watching TV and eating junk food, supposing the child is not brought to church into any recognition of his faith, supposing he's given no particular nurture right and wrong at school, how will they turn out?

Dr. Dobson: Supposing his family becomes the gang or the gang becomes his family.

Dr. Bill Bennett: Right. How will they turn out well? I would submit to America, all of America, and this is what I say as I go around the country, this is no longer a hypothetical question. We know how they turn it.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah. That's right.

Dr. Bill Bennett: That's who we're talking about. Had enough? Has everybody had enough of this? I mean, can we now stop and say the evidence is in? Let's go back to strengthening the institutions of family, church, and neighborhood, and community.

Dr. Dobson: Look at those old black and white Andy Griffith shows. Technically flawed, 1962 technology, and yet they're on all day long on television, and people are watching them.

Dr. Bill Bennett: That's right.

Dr. Dobson: There must be a hunger there for something that's missing.

Dr. Bill Bennett: Absolutely. The meaning and the real stuff. People have had the counterfeit. They want the real stuff. Men want the real stuff.

Dr. Dobson: Next question.

CG Macklin: My name is CG Macklin. I'm from Lufkin, Texas. As a city government manager, what suggestions would you give to those of us in positions of authority at the local government level to direct or influence positive change in the culture of our communities?

Dr. Bill Bennett: Well, there's a lot to do. You know I'm a very strong advocate of parental choice in education. That's not going to be resolved at the local government level. However, local governments can sponsor initiatives, can develop pilot programs, and that's being considered in some communities. That's one.

Two, a very important thing is places where young people go. There should be places where young people go where things are upbeat, if you will, uplifting, that lift up, that don't bring down. You go to community centers around this country and what happens is they tend to, if it's not nurtured, they tend to drop to the lowest common denominator. The bad kids drive out the good kids. That's a very important thing. It is critical.

I mean, the most important problem we face is the family I believe. The illegitimacy rate, the collapse of the American family, divorce, that cluster of problems. It is simply the case that there are an awful lot of kids without responsible adult supervision. There I think opportunities for cities to provide entertainment and places for kids to go, and work, and talk, and read, and enjoy themselves can be very, very encouraging. The borders and parameters of this, I think, are too tightly constrained by people. They think they can't do anything uplifting. They can't do anything that has any spiritual dimension. I don't think that's right.

Dr. Dobson: Dr. Bill Bennett, it is a pleasure to have you back with us. I appreciate so much what you stand for, for your willingness to speak out.

Dr. Bill Bennett: Thank you.

Dr. Dobson: You rent for far more money than we could ever pay you, and I do appreciate you coming by.

Roger Marsh: A truly lively broadcast about the immorality facing the next generation here on Family Talk. Sadly, the obscenity and profanity that Dr. Bill Bennett fought nearly 20 years ago has only gotten worse. Parents must be vigilant about the media their kids consume on a daily basis. Even an innocent encounter can harm a child's physical or mental wellbeing.

Now, if you'd like to know more about Dr. Bennett's work, go to drjamesdobson.org. On our broadcast page, you'll find links to his books and also his brand new podcast. That's drjamesdobson.org, and then click on to today's broadcast page.

Have you been impacted by the message of these two classic programs here on Family Talk? Well, if so, we would love to hear from you. Now, the best way you can connect with our ministry is by liking and following our Facebook page. You can find our profile by going to facebook.com and then searching for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Once you're there, join in the conversation with thousands of other listeners and share what you've learned on these programs. We are blessed to hear how these timeless discussions still impart wisdom to marriages and families today. So go now to Facebook.com and search for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. We look forward to hearing from you there.

Playing off the tone of these two broadcasts, question for you: Are you doing all you can to defend traditional values? As we head into this pivotal election season, your vote is critical in preserving our nation. Dr. Dobson believes that there are several moral issues at stake this November that every Christian needs to know. He's broken them down through his new Faith Votes publication. Now, before you head to the polls, request your copy of this helpful resource. You can do that by going to drjamesdobson.org/faithvotes. Read and apply this wisdom by taking a stand for biblical values at the ballot box. Again, you can get a free copy of this Faith Votes publication when you go to drjamesdobson.org/faithvotes.

Well, that's all the time we have for today. Be sure to tune in again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Have a safe and blessed day.

Announcer:

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