



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Living as Salt and Light – Part 2

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

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Announcer: Today, on Family Talk:

Roger Marsh: Do Christians have a moral responsibility to be involved in politics? We are to be set apart for God, but should we allow evil to destroy our society? Abortion, religious persecution, and socialism all threaten our deeply held biblical beliefs. This broadcast that you're about to hear will highlight our obligation to be active in public policy from the local to the national level.

Welcome to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. On today's program, Dr. Dobson's guest, once again, is Bob Vander Plaats, President and CEO of The Family Leader. He was a key advisor in both Senator Ted Cruz and Governor Mike Huckabee's presidential candidacies. Bob is also an author, speaker, and political commentator. He is widely recognized across the nation as a strong voice for conservative and Christian values.

There's a great deal of content to address, so let's get started. Here once again with Dr. Dobson is Bob Vander Plaats on this edition of Family Talk.

Dr. Dobson: Bob, you have been a part of that Family Policy Council initiative that has taken place for 30 years now across the country. I wish you would describe its impact and why you think that we did that and what you hope we have accomplished with it.

Bob Vander Plaats: Oh, boy. The Family Policy Council, first of all, a great deal of gratitude to you for casting that vision of saying every state should have a presence at their state capitol and in who they put into office if we're going to advance policy that's according to God's heart and to His precepts. That vision 30 years ago has birthed 41, 42 state policy councils right now.

Initially, Dr. Dobson, we were all about family policy. If it benefited the family, we were for it.

Dr. Dobson: Yes.

Bob Vander Plaats: If it took away from the family, we were against it. We had teams down at every legislature in those states advocating for family policy that would bless God.

Then we discovered, you know what? Policy is directly correlated with who we elect to hold office so that if we elect a pro-life governor or legislator or president, most likely, they're going to lead with pro-life, but if we elect a pro-abortion legislator, governor, or president, they're going to lead with abortion being an issue. We saw now elections really do matter and how it impacts policy. So, we've been doing that, but then even some of the people that we've elected that we wanted to get elected have let us down from time to time.

Then when we took a look, we said, "This is about cultural transformation." Hebrews 2:1 says, "Be careful that you do not drift from what you have heard." I'd say we are not just drifting today, but we are in a dead sprint away from the heart of God.

Dr. Dobson: It's headlong.

Bob Vander Plaats: It is headlong and it is definitely a competing worldview of, either God is or God isn't, so we keep sprinting away from the heart of God. Now, we're saying we need spiritual revival, we need cultural transformation.

The agent that Jesus gave us was the church. He looked at Peter and He said, "Upon this rock, I'll build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." We believed, let's take Jesus at His word.

That's what we're saying, is that how do we inspire the church to engage this institution of government and politics? Again, not for a candidate, and not for a policy, but for the advancement of God's kingdom.

What we're seeing with these policy councils, Dr. Dobson, is it's been a maturation of vision, but I really believe not only has it been huge, the impact that it's having on this country, but it provides the hope for revival for this country.

Dr. Dobson: It does, it does.

Bob Vander Plaats: I believe that does with every stitch of my DNA.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah. The Family Policy Councils have also dealt with cultural issues such as gambling and pornography, the drug problem, many other things. It really does please me that that germ of an idea that the state should handle their own family policy initiatives, and people took it and ran with it. I want to thank Tom Minnery for helping with this.

Bob Vander Plaats: Oh, sure.

Dr. Dobson: He was working with us at Focus on the Family at that time. Tom really made it happen. The Lord really used him. Do you agree with that?

Bob Vander Plaats: I really do. What Tom really got is that every state is unique, every state is different, just the way the founders intended it, but the one thing that remains the same is the gospel, is the word of God. Although some of the issues might be different in Ohio than they are in Iowa or Florida than they are in Michigan or Minnesota, the word of God is still the same yesterday, today, and forever. The gospel still penetrates and changes lives. That's what we're seen as being the vehicle now that is really transforming these states.

Dr. Dobson: The Family Policy Councils, or the remnants of them, came together last September to reinvigorate and take another new run at this effort. You were there. The Lord was there for that event, too.

Bob Vander Plaats: Oh, boy.

Dr. Dobson: How many do you suppose were represented?

Bob Vander Plaats: The 10 States were represented of which we call part of The Daniel Initiative.

Dr. Dobson: All right, then we really need to focus on that.

Bob Vander Plaats: Sure.

Dr. Dobson: You are in one of those Family Policy Councils, you call it The FAMiLY LEADER and you have your own approach to it. I think one of the most interesting aspects is what you're doing with what you call The Daniel Initiative. You need to talk about that.

Bob Vander Plaats: What it started off, I'll give you the foundation, is when again, was after that meeting with you after the 2012 election about what do we do. We saw the answers that we believe, the transformative agent, the transcendent agent is the church of Jesus Christ, and we needed to get them engaged again. We did almost a complete revamp at The FAMiLY LEADER and turned our model on its head that said, "Okay, we're going to lead with cultural transformation. We're going to lead with engaging the church."

We started facilitating, one by one, that's now led to 1300 pastor visits to the Iowa Capitol, and going forward with the shepherds of God's church to the shepherds of God's government. What these pastors are seeing, it changes everything because these legislators still see the pastor as an authority, as an authority in Scripture.

Then the pastors are seeing when they're at the capitol, they're seeing, okay, we can have a voice into legislation that honors God, we can have a voice in who gets to represent us as elected officials, but we also can team together and say,

"How can we solve some of the issues that our communities are dealing with as the church of Jesus?" It's basically being the hands and feet of Jesus as the church.

Dr. Dobson: Who's in The Daniel Initiative?

Bob Vander Plaats: That started in Iowa. Then what happened was, I'm going to give a lot of credit to some of our donors, investors, saying "the model you have created has proven to engage the church at an unprecedented level." And the pastors are actually doing the job of going to the government officials and being the salt and light into that place, and they're being the Nathan to the David.

In that, we're impacting elections with ministers of God and we're advancing righteous policy. The key part of it is, is that we want to make sure that we're a model that others want to follow, that we're not disqualified for the prize of the gospel.

These donors said, "Oh, my goodness, what's happened in Iowa would change this country," so they put their money where their mouth was and they said, "Would you lead and mentor other key states in this country on what you're doing with that model?" Our first date was Ohio, then Minnesota, then Wisconsin, then New Hampshire, then Indiana, Pennsylvania, Florida, Maine, and Arizona.

It's not political, but it's biblical. This is the whole part about looking higher. It's about stewarding your vote in an election, but you have to be a voice in that election. God doesn't give you the option to say, "I'm just going to cop out. I'm not going to play." No, no, no, no. You don't get to do that. You're a follower of Jesus. He wants you to be a voice into your culture. Therefore, steward the vote and vote for the individual that would most represent being a minister of God to advance His righteousness.

Dr. Dobson: Well, let me understand what happens there. You bring together a group of pastors who make an appointment with the political leaders and then you go to the state capitol. Do they receive you?

Bob Vander Plaats: Oh, they do receive us. It is amazing. This is not partisan. We don't look at it Republican, Democrat, right versus left. We look at, frankly, soft versus hard. Are you soft to the gospel or hard to the gospel? But we're going to speak to you regardless. It's pastors coming to meet with their elected officials, but also building a relationship back at home with the elected official, so wherever the elected official resides, that pastor or pastors will develop a relationship with that elected official. Whether the church walked away or whether the church got pushed away to say, "I don't want to deal with this anymore."

Dr. Dobson: How about both?

Bob Vander Plaats: Right. Now, we're saying "Let's re-engage and let's go to a biblical model," because this is still a biblical model of the shepherds of the church going to the shepherds of government. Then they see from a biblical perspective how important it is that we elect the right men and women to public office who will advance policy according to God's heart.

Again, always in an effort of that we will not be disqualified for carrying the gospel message. We don't look at "that person's our enemy cause they are not with us." We view that person as an opportunity not to be won over by an issue, but be won over by a gospel. Let's win them over with the gospel of Jesus and then let's make disciples out of them. That's how you revive a nation.

Dr. Dobson: Are you pleased with the result?

Bob Vander Plaats: We really are. Matter of fact, Iowa has a lot of success. Matter of fact, Governor Kim Reynolds is a great example. Kim Reynolds is a believer in Jesus Christ. She's a minister of God. We're thrilled to have her be our governor. If you recall, she is the governor who signed the first heartbeat legislation to protect unborn lives in the nation. That was in Iowa.

Her opponent in the governor's race of 2018 was the former chair of Planned Parenthood and a wealthy businessman out of Des Moines. All the polls showed that Governor Reynolds was going to lose to Fred Hubbell, the Planned Parenthood chair. Governor Reynolds texted me the Sunday before the Tuesday election and she said, "Bob, if your base turns out," which is basically the church, "If your base turns out, I have a shot." I said to her with all the confidence in the world, "Our base is going to turn out."

She was supposed to lose by three percentage points. She won by three percentage points, a six-point turnaround. It was because the church of Jesus Christ was inspired to steward their vote for a minister of God who would advance righteous policy. That's all we need to do. I think this is where we restore the greatness of this country, but it's through the vehicle, the foundation, the anchor of the church.

Dr. Dobson: Well, Bob, that was a wonderful illustration of what happened in Iowa. Can you describe what's taking place in some of the other Daniel Initiative states without being more political than we want to be?

Bob Vander Plaats: I sure can. To give you an example, in one of the states that we're partnering with, we have a video out called Honoring God. In the video, it speaks to the election, in this case, it was the 2018 election. It was all about look higher, think bigger, steward your vote. Even when the choices are hard, you're called to choose, so choose prayerfully and carefully. Will you join us on this election day to impact an election by stewarding your vote on behalf of your faith? God has given us an unbelievable opportunity here in America to make a difference.

Well, we have his video out, it's very well done. Well, an outlet received this video and watched it multiple times, and what they were looking for is the hidden political message, and they couldn't find it. What they did is they called one of our state peers and they said, "Well, listen. I've got this video, I've watched it multiple times and I'm looking for the political agenda in the video, the hidden political agenda. Can you tell me where it is?"

And this state leader said, "It's not there. What you see is what it is." Then that outlet decided to play it numerous of times, we believe about a hundred different times to their audience, which was a vast audience. The election came down to just thousands of votes that separated who would be governor, who'd be US Senator. I'm telling you, the church showed up in a major way and I believe ministers of God in that election were elected.

Dr. Dobson: That really does validate your belief system, that if you talk about your mission, your obligation before God, your biblical beliefs and the issues that are at stake, you don't have to talk about politics.

Bob Vander Plaats: You're right, but it has to be authentic. It has to be from the heart.

Dr. Dobson: Yes, it's not manipulative.

Bob Vander Plaats: Yeah, it's threaded with authenticity. I tell people all the time, "Well, because we have the opportunity, you have the opportunity." We get to be around a lot of elected officials or those who want to be elected officials. They say, "Well, how do you deal with that?"

I say, "Well, we deal with it the same, regardless of who they are. We're called to pray for them daily, so we pray for them daily. We are called to cheer them on when they do what is right, so we cheer them on when they do what is right, but we're also called on to be a voice of accountability when they go outside of the bounds."

That's the Nathan to the David. It's uncomfortable at times, but we also want to be a voice of accountability. When we're that voice of accountability, in addition to cheering them on when they do something right. Then people understand, this isn't about a seat at the table, this isn't about eating the king's food and drinking the king's wine. Daniel said, "I didn't want any of that," 'kay? "I'm going to speak the truth to a king, even if I end up in the lion's den." That's the role of the church. The pastors get that. They go, "I can do that. That is being an agent, an ambassador on behalf of God versus an agent or ambassador on behalf of a political party," if that makes sense.

Dr. Dobson: What makes that so brilliant is that everybody has tried to figure out a way to get Christian people to vote.

Bob Vander Plaats: Sure.

Dr. Dobson: They don't do it. I mean, half of them sit at home, I've never understood that, and half of them are not even registered to vote. There's just no interest. If they see the larger mission, then it takes it out of the political arena and turns it into a divine assignment.

Bob Vander Plaats: If they see the larger mission and if it's fueled by the pastor from the pulpit, that makes all the difference in the world. George Barna says that of Christians, "37% of registered-to-vote Christians who attend church, they're not voting." 37% of them aren't.

Well, now, if the pastor embraces this mission and sees the voice of the church being a call to culture, that can change a country, but it's doing it the right way, the authentic way.

Dr. Dobson: Where'd you come up with that?

Bob Vander Plaats: Well, frankly, I wish I could say, boy, this was just a brilliant idea on our part. We thought it was for a little while, and then I did a little bit of study and research. Matter of fact, aided a lot by Eric Metaxas, who I know is a friend of yours as well.

Dr. Dobson: Very much so.

Bob Vander Plaats: In that is of William Wilberforce, because Wilberforce was all about playing the political game. Too often, we've about playing the political game: "Let's geofence, let's voter target, let's not do everything that the world does." David taking on Goliath, "Here's the world's armor."

When William Wilberforce got his eyes opened up to Jesus Christ, now he saw the ills of slavery, and what he said is that "We need to end slavery, but we must restore manners." The way to restore manners, which was cultural transformation, is you need to lead with the gospel.

Really, what Wilberforce did back in his day, which led to an unprecedented revival, that's what we're doing. We're saying "Our eyes are opened up." We see the ills of abortion killing the children. We see the threats to religious liberty. We see what's taken place. This is about leading with the gospel, transforming a culture, electing ministers of God, advancing righteous policy, and being a model that others want to follow, so kids look up to their moms and dad and they go, "You're consistent with what you say." To grandpas and grandmas: "That is who you are." That's what gives us hope and we believe we can impact an election while winning a generation.

Dr. Dobson: Take us back to William Wilberforce. What a great man he was and what he accomplished. We're talking to some people who are perhaps younger and have no idea who he is. Talk about him. If he's our role model, let's find out who he is.

Bob Vander Plaats: William Wilberforce was a British parliamentarian, and he was a young parliamentarian. He was an up-and-comer. They thought he'd be prime minister one day. He went to all the parties, drank the wine, ate the food, but his goal was to be prime minister.

Then he had to travel a distance because of his mother's health issue and he had a partner go with him, basically in a horse-drawn stagecoach, and they got into a deep conversation about the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's where his eyes opened up. When he saw the ills of slavery, he committed himself: "I'm going to end slavery," but he knew he had to bring the culture with him. The only way he was going to bring the culture with him was by leading with the gospel to get the cultural transformation to end slavery.

The other key about William Wilberforce that we need to understand today with the "We want it now" American, he persevered, he persevered, and he persevered.

Dr. Dobson: Despite defeat after defeat.

Bob Vander Plaats: And threats on his life and everything else. He was mocked, he was ridiculed and he persevered and he persevered and he persevered. I believe it was 42 years, three days before his death, they abolish slavery.

Dr. Dobson: Yeah, yeah.

Bob Vander Plaats: I'm telling you, have the spirit of a William Wilberforce that was fueled by the heart for the gospel, a love for his culture, and then to end some of the ills that we see that's against God's heart.

Dr. Dobson: The Daniel Initiative is modeled after what Wilberforce did?

Bob Vander Plaats: Very much so. Very much so. Those four points that we talk about, I think William Wilberforce, if he didn't write them, he would have written them about cultural transformation where you lead with the gospel, you anchor it in prayer, you authentically engage in the church. Then you engage in elections to impact elections with ministers of God, you advanced righteous policy according to God's heart, and then be a model for others to follow.

Dr. Dobson: What in the Book of Daniel inspired you to take his name?

Bob Vander Plaats: Well, that was very easy because I have been personally offered a lot of different options to be at the table. It's saying our call isn't to be at the table. Our call is to be a voice of impact and influence, but our call is to represent the church of Jesus Christ and to bring that to the institution of government, to the elected officials. That's where we say "Think bigger, look higher," because our call is bigger because we answer to God.



We want to be a voice regardless of who's elected and who's advancing what policy that we would be a credible voice. As soon as they see, "Oh, this is about Bob's personal gain," or, "This is about Bob's personal elevation and status," Daniel, we love Daniel because Daniel was never enticed by the king's table, he was willing to be thrown in the lion's den, and more than that, they knew where to find him because he was on his knees praying. To us, that's the heart of The Daniel Initiative.

Dr. Dobson: How can people pray for you and this entire initiative, not just in Iowa, but in now 10 states? They can pray for another ...?

Bob Vander Plaats: 40.

Dr. Dobson: 40?

Bob Vander Plaats: Really, we want wisdom, we want discernment, we want integrity to the call, that we don't compromise, that we don't short circuit, that we trust God, that we know it comes from God. This is not about building a national organization at all, that is not what we want to do. We want every state to be strong and to be bed rocked with the foundation of the church and the pastors of the church into their culture. It gives us great excitement.

Bob Vander Plaats: I'd encourage your listeners, too, if they don't know this, but go to [thefamilyleader.com](http://thefamilyleader.com) to learn more about our ministry, but then more about the heart of The Daniel Initiative as well.

Dr. Dobson: Tell me how people can get that video that you were talking about.

Bob Vander Plaats: Well, we can put it up there. I don't know if it's on our website right now, but we definitely could put an example of that video up on our website.

Dr. Dobson: How do they get it? What's your website?

Bob Vander Plaats: The T-H-E family leader dot com, [thefamilyleader.com](http://thefamilyleader.com).

Dr. Dobson: The name of the video?

Bob Vander Plaats: The name of the video would be Honoring God 2018. Even though you go, "2018? That's political," watch it. It's biblical and it's very inspiring. They'd want their church to show that video.

Dr. Dobson: I hope that's going to spread through the whole nation. Bob Vander Plaats, you are just, I said it yesterday, you're a good man. I love what you're doing, your team. When I ask people to pray for you, I mean to pray for your wonderful staff as well, and your team.

Bob Vander Plaats: Amen.

Dr. Dobson: Your director of communications is Drew Zahn, Z-A-H-N, is that ...?

Bob Vander Plaats: It is.

Dr. Dobson: He's sitting right here. Pray for this entire initiative because I see it as having the potential of turning people back to biblical principles and maybe even changing America's future.

Bob Vander Plaats: It may just be a revived America that honors God and blesses people.

Dr. Dobson: Wouldn't that be a great accomplishment?

Bob Vander Plaats: Amen. Thank you for your vision.

Dr. Dobson: God is in this, isn't He?

Bob Vander Plaats: We're better together.

Dr. Dobson: Thanks for being with us again, Bob.

Bob Vander Plaats: Thank you. God bless you.

Roger Marsh: An enlightening conversation about a Christian's charge to engage the culture, especially in the realm of public policy, here on Family Talk. To learn more about Bob Vander Plaats and The FAMiLY LEADER, visit today's broadcast page at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org).

I also urge you to connect with our Dobson Policy Center on Facebook. This page keeps you informed on cultural and policy issues that are impacting your family. There, you can also see the video that Bob Vander Plaats and Dr. Dobson were referencing just a moment ago as well. Find and follow our profile by going to [facebook.com/dobsonpolicycenter](https://facebook.com/dobsonpolicycenter).

Thanks so much for joining us over the past couple of days and be sure to listen in again tomorrow for the first part of Dr. Dobson's classic interview featuring Joe White and John Gibson. Their focus will be this generation's need for Christian mentoring. It's an uplifting discussion that you won't want to miss on the next edition of Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks for listening.

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