



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Harvest at Home: Finding Peace During Crisis – Part 1

Guest(s): Greg Laurie & Barry Meguiar

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Dr. Dobson: Well, hello everyone, I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

Roger Marsh: Hello everyone. I'm Roger Marsh and this is Family Talk, a production of the James Dobson Family Institute. As anxiety continues to rise over the outbreak of COVID-19, we want to offer a message of hope to you today. A few weeks ago, Dr. Dobson and two of his friends talked via video chat about this crisis. Today, you're going to hear his conversation with businessman Barry Meguiar, and Pastor Greg Laurie. There was such a great response to the broadcast when we first aired it, that we want you to hear it again. These three men will examine our continued responsibility to evangelize and to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the midst of crisis. There's a lot of content to get to, so let's get started. Here again is Dr. Dobson on this edition of Family Talk.

Dr. Dobson: Well, hello everyone. I'm Dr. James Dobson and this is the voice of the Radio Ministry Family Talk. My wife Shirley and I are sequestered in a little condo today out in California in keeping with the requests made by President Trump that we stay at home and do what we can to help control this Coronavirus, which is running its course, I hope and pray. My love and prayers are expressed to those of you who are also trying to ride out this storm. We pray especially for those of you who are struggling, those who are already sick with this virus, that God will be with you, that he'll encourage you and you will feel His Spirit nearby.

Now, let me bring our program on with this comment. It's very easy to overstate the importance of a particular broadcast because frankly, they all feel that way to me. But what we're going to talk about today is in a class by itself, because it has to do with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and evangelism itself. And it doesn't get more important than that. Let me acknowledge for those of you who don't know me, that I am not a pastor, an evangelist. I'm not a theologian, I'm not a church historian. I just don't bear those credentials, but I'm committed to the depths of my being to the cause of Jesus Christ and to his kingdom. And it would appear to me and many others to whom I've talked, that the Coronavirus that's

plaguing the human family now has breathtaking implications for the church and for evangelism.

From my readings about church history, I've learned that every few hundred years, Christianity breaks out of its institutional container and it spreads to the outside world. That certainly happened in the first and the second Great Awakening in a way that changed the western world enormously. There are those of us who believe that we might be in the early stages of something just as significant. Only time will tell, but to get into this topic, I want to introduce and welcome two great friends of mine who are squarely in the middle of this cultural reconfiguration.

The first is pastor Greg Laurie, pastor of Harvest Church in Riverside, California. He's an evangelist and a pastor who has introduced hundreds of thousands of people to Jesus Christ with a simple gospel message. A couple of years ago, he spoke at AT&T stadium in Dallas, and that holds more than 80,000 people and it was filled to capacity, with mostly millennials, as I understand it. And there were many thousands of people outside who couldn't get in. God has opened the wide expanse of humanity to his message and I'm grateful for it. Greg preaches the unedited word of God. And the response has been wonderful.

Also with us today is Barry Meguiar, an evangelist layman whose ministry Revival Outside the Walls is what every layman's responsibility is, and this is a passion for Barry. I've known him for more than 40 years, and he cares more about the subject of introducing people to Christ than any other subject. He's a businessman, but this is where his heart is. So I have these two men with me, Greg and Barry. It's such a pleasure to talk to you about something so important. Barry, I'm going to begin with you. Tell me why there is something deep within you that is driving your passion.

Barry Meguiar:

First off the need, Jim, 80% of America is basically outside the walls of the church. How are we going to reach them? They're open to the gospel. Here's some hard statistics for us, real quick. Over 86% of the unchurched, we think they're not interested, that we'd just turn them off. We'd be offending them if we say "That's a cop out, that's just excuse." 86% of the unchurched, even if they call themselves atheists, know the world's out of control, not just because of the virus, but for the last couple of years because of all the chaos. They know the world's out of control, would like to believe there's a God who can make sense out of the chaos and are actively looking for somebody to tell them. That's basically everybody around us, we're in a world full of people that are desperate for the message of salvation that we carry around in these clay pots of ordinary life, you might say, and for us not to tell them would just be insane. But we're not, less than 1% of us are actually telling them.

So, we're actually seeing, Jim, the fields are white for harvest. They are. And the laborers are few. And that is activated now by if we go back to 9/11, we all know there have been a lot of studies on it. The church attendance after 9/11 soared to record levels. It went ballistic. They all who were anxious, they knew

their immortality, and they ran to their churches. But the churches were not preaching the gospel. Within six months, we're back to lower levels than after 9/11. We're facing that situation again. God didn't create this virus, but he's given us this incredible opportunity, but they can't rush to the churches now. So, they got to rush online. And what's the message going online right now as they rush to their Sunday morning services?

And largely they're feel good, do the right thing, and love on people and be Christ-like, and God will protect you, and nothing about the cross and salvation and coming into the family of God and repentance. We've lost the whole message of salvation, what church is all about. And we're leaving these people wanting in a very moment in church history, in the history of the world, quite frankly, this moment in time when we have the opportunity to lead millions of people to Jesus Christ as lay people, moving everybody every day and as pastors proclaiming the gospel from our pulpits. It's incredible.

Dr. Dobson: Oh, Barry, that moved my heart. Greg, pick it up right there. I'd really like to hear what happened last Sunday when you were heard by what, over 250,000 people?

Greg Laurie: It's actually 350,000 people, Dr. Dobson. Yeah. What happened was, without any notice, without any warning to our congregation, one day we're meeting in person. The next week, the church is literally shut down. We can't have crowds of 10 or more people gathered together. So we went online and we had already been developing our online ministry, but we weren't ready for something of this capacity.

We had a 400% increase in viewership, and the first week we did it, 250,000 people logged on. And by the way, that's a conservative number because we know in many cases that wasn't just one person, but that was a whole family watching it in their front room because you can watch our service like through the Roku box, we have a Harvest app, through Apple TV we have a Harvest app. We also have that app for iPhones and Android phones and of course our website, harvest.org, but it just exploded. And then last time we did it, it was 350,000 people.

But here's what's amazing. At the end of the program, I invited people to come to Jesus Christ. I explained the gospel simply and extended an invitation. Week one, we had 1700 responses. Week two, we had about 3200 responses. So to me, people are just waiting for someone to tell them. I'm reminded of this story of the man from Ethiopia that went to Jerusalem searching for God. And he met Philip who was sort of waiting in the desert as he was directed by an angel, and the man from Ethiopia was reading aloud from scripture, and Philip asked him the question, "Do you understand what you're reading?" And the man responded by saying, "How can I know unless someone shows me the way?" Dr. Dobson, I think literally, millions of people are waiting for someone to just show them the way.

Dr. Dobson: Oh, Greg that was so exciting what happened. I was one of those 250,000. In fact, Shirley and I were two of them. We were watching you and cheering you on and link that response last Sunday to what I said in my introduction that perhaps Christianity is breaking out of its institutional container. Do you see it that way?

Greg Laurie: That's a very interesting question. My answer is yes. This is an unprecedented opportunity to reach people in a new way. And so I would just say to all my friends out there that are pastors or communicators, you've got to adapt. And right now, tech is our friend. Use tech. And if you don't know how, find a young person. They know how to use tech. Everybody needs a nerd as a friend right now because they'll help us get our tech set up so we can start communicating because people are very open.

And I think of the words of Jesus in the Book of Revelation, where he speaks to the Church of Philadelphia. And in my belief is he's speaking to the church of the end times. And he makes this statement, "I have set before you an open door and no man can shut it." And I think we have a unique open door of opportunity, Paul often used that verbiage. He'd say something like "A door was opened for me by the Lord to the gentile." So the idea is an open door is simply an opportunity. But look, now, let me just talk to an individual. This is not about just being online. This is when you're at the supermarket and you see that frightened look on someone's face and you say, "Is everything okay? Can I pray for you?" I'm sitting here with my friend Barry Meguiar. Barry is a far more effective one-on-one evangelist than I am because Dr. Dobson, I know you've been out to restaurants with Barry.

Dr. Dobson: It's amazing. It's amazing what he does.

Greg Laurie: He always engages the server. I remember I was with him not long ago, and he started talking to the server and he asked him the question, "Is there anything I can pray for you about?" And I'm actually thinking, "Is this a good idea? We haven't even placed our order yet." And the server says, "Well, yes," and all of a sudden the server is opening his heart up and Barry's ministering to him. I'm telling you, if you just say to someone, "Can I pray for you? Can I help you? You look troubled. Are you okay?" Look for a way to start an evangelistic conversation because people, they don't know how to say, "Hi, I'm lost. Tell me about Jesus." We've got to help them there.

But let me illustrate. I was speaking recently and I was at an event at a college. And a young lady came up, she was, "I've always wanted to meet you, and I just have a lot of problems." She started pouring her heart out to me. And I don't normally do this, but the Lord spoke to my heart and my sense was she wanted to get saved right there. I said, "Excuse me, have you ever asked Jesus Christ into your life?" And she said, "No." And I said, "Would you like to do that right now?" And she said, "Yes." Sometimes people are literally waiting for someone to just show them the way.

Barry Meguiar: It's so easy. Let me talk on two fronts. One on the pastoral front and one on the lay side. And first off, all of us should be moving everybody every day closer to Jesus. I mean, we're all in full time ministry. I'm speaking as a layman now. I'm a businessman. All right? Everything we do and say, everything you do and say moves people closer or further away from the Lord. Now here's the thing. You can't just be good. Most Christians believe that being good leads people to Jesus. 75% of America thinks being good gets you to Heaven. You know that more than a half of all Christians believe being good can get you to heaven? It's unbelievable. So, when you have messages of feel good messages and being like Christ, "just be like Christ." That's telling people, "Oh, I can just be good and I can get to Heaven."

That's missing the... None of them mention the cross, repentance, confession, salvation, the whole gospel message is gone, it's about being good. So it's so easy to share your faith and just ask people simple questions. And that's the easy thing, and you just develop a relationship and they'll open up and you just share. It's so much fun. It's what Christianity's all about. Let me go back to a minute. I want to point out what's really happening here. This is a watershed moment, folks. Greg, you were telling us that on an average Sunday before the coronavirus hit us, about 100 people accepted the Lord online every week. Is that right?

Greg Laurie: That'd be a good day.

Barry Meguiar: Yeah, on a good day. Okay, look what happened. Look what happened. Look what the virus is doing. This can be multiplied across America. Every pastor listening to us right now should recognize this. This is not business as usual to give your normal little paddle a message to make everybody feel good and go out and have a good day. They're coming to our churches and we have responsibility. We have opportunity to here, share our faith. Greg shares the gospel message, the salvation message at the end of every single service. He was doing before this, got about 100 people on a good day. First day after this virus, got 1700 people accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and savior. And this last Sunday had how many?

Greg Laurie: Over 3100.

Barry Meguiar: 3000 people. That's one pastor, folks. What if all of our pastors? We need to call our pastors. We're giving alter calls at the end of our services. I travel America. I'm in a different church all the time. I not only don't hear a sending message, "I equip you for ministry and you go out." You never hear that. You never hear a salvation message. It's a lot of smoke on the stage and entertainment, and a short sermon makes you feel good and go out and have a good day. We missed the point. The church is broken, folks. We got to get back to what we're all about, what Jesus Christ has called us to do, both as pastors and as lay people.

Dr. Dobson: Greg, did that blow you away by the response to that sermon? We could see it coming. They actually not only gave their heart to Christ, but they told you about it.

Greg Laurie: Yeah, they did. There's a way they can indicate their response on our website. So this all happens at harvest.org in our Sunday service that we're calling Harvest at Home. So, I invite people to join us this Sunday and be a part of it. But it's a funny thing, Dr. Dobson, I didn't share an overtly evangelistic message. My topic was, "God's answer to fear, anxiety, and worry."

Those topics, what the Bible says about these topics, and how to turn your fear into faith, and how to turn your worry into worship, and how to turn your panic into prayer. So I was pointing them to scripture, but then at the end they made it very clear. "What I am saying is not for everybody, it's for Christians only. And my question to you is, is Christ living inside of you? What does that mean?" Then I explained it to people and I gave them an invitation to respond. So I would be pleased if I gave an overtly evangelistic message and I had that response. But to consider, it was kind of more like a Bible study with an evangelistic appeal at the end. But the point is simply this, they're just waiting for someone to show them how to do it.

Barry Meguiar: Oh absolutely. As a person sitting in the pew, because you're my pastor, I watch how you do it. And you did on Sunday. At the very beginning of the service, you said "I'm going to give you an opportunity to accept the Lord," at the end. So you set them up, then they listen. And you take the Mother's Day message or Father's Day message or whatever's going on through the year, and you speak to that moment, but you always bring it back. "I want to talk to you now that don't have this joy and don't have this confidence, and you can have it right now." And you give such a clear presentation of the gospel and how to accept Jesus Christ and lead them in that prayer. You do it about as well as anybody I know. But that's what every pastor is called to do. And every layman's called to do just in normal conversations.

Dr. Dobson: Barry, you find that many Christians are afraid to share their faith, aren't they? Well, what are they afraid of?

Barry Meguiar: There're just excuses. There's no reasons. And it is the great commission. There's a reason it's the great commission. And it's the most fun. As a teen, I swore I think most people think you have to get people down on their knees and pray the sinner's prayer. I got to get them saved right now. And that's just ridiculous. I mean, it takes 15, 20 times for anybody to get to the Lord. And you're somebody along that line, and the scripture is very clear. Some water and some fertilize and whatever, and the Lord brings a harvest. So if you just move them a [inaudible 00:17:40], just be nice to them. You don't have to be trained to love on people. We can all love on people. But don't stop there. Always connect something to God so they know... Just say, "Have a good day and God bless you."

So, when you walk away they say, "That person's really a nice person. I like that Tom. He's really a nice guy." No, no. "I like Tom. He's a Christian. Maybe I need to be a Christian." If non-believers who want nothing to do with God would start being loved on by Christians and all of a sudden they'd start saying, "I'm meeting a lot of people that are loving on me that are kind for me and they're all Christians. Maybe I need to rethink it." I guess, here's the point. None of us can change the world. None of us can do that, but we can change our world. We can be a light. We can be a light in the waiting room, in the restaurant to the server, and to the cashier in the store, we can be a light. And if we all start doing that, there's 30 million of us that actually have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We've shrunk down, but we're still 30 million of us. We've got gait.

Dr. Dobson: This is a particular moment in time. What's happening right now is either going to work to our detriment as a nation or it's going to make us better. It's going to make us better or going to make us worse. And Satan wants to use it to absolutely destroy this country. He wants to destroy respect for the Constitution, for our founding fathers, and for the churches, and every good thing. But at the same time, there is this opportunity in it to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that's never occurred. Jesus never talked to as many people in his ministry as you have talked to in the last week, Greg. I mean, there is an opportunity now to not let this go to waste. Hang on to it, use it for God's purposes.

Barry Meguiar: This is a moment in time for the church. Just don't waste it.

Greg Laurie: I really agree, and the Bible does say that God can cause all things to work together for good, to those that love Him and are called according to His purpose. It doesn't mean necessarily the bad things become good, but it does mean that good can come despite bad things. And there are some actually very hopeful things that we're seeing. As an example, more families, they're sitting down at the dinner table together and having a meal than probably anytime we can remember in recent history, especially since the introduction of the cellphone that seems to distract everyone.

So, you see families spending time together, you see people less distracted, but at the same time you have a lot of friction in homes and there are people that don't know the Lord. So it's kind of a mixed bag. But I think God could take this and use it for good when we just sort of slow down and focus on what really matters in life. Some people, their God is money. And all of a sudden, the stock market is going up and down like a roller coaster. For another person, their God is Hollywood and films and you can't even go to a theater and see a movie right now. For another person, their God might be sports and pretty much the sports are shut down right now. And even in a way, the churches are shut down, but then again, they aren't.

Though the doors of physical buildings are closed, the door for the church is more open than it's ever been to reach our culture. This is a special moment and we got to walk through this door. Hey, we've been praying for a spiritual

awakening. We've been praying for revival. What if God would use COVID-19 to pave the way for an awakening in America?

Barry Meguiar:

Jim, let me just say this real quick. The most powerful thing we can do as lay people right now, and it's easy. You don't have to get in anybody's face, you don't have to come up with the words, whatever. This is the easiest way to do it. All of us have a ton of unsaved friends that we have on our email list. So what I'm doing, I'm emailing every one of them on Saturday night. I know they're sitting around the next day on Sunday. They have nothing to do. They're looking for something of value to do. And the one I sent out this week, I titled it "Happy Hour." I said, "Hey, I want to tell you that you can have a happy hour tomorrow, happiest moment of your day tomorrow, and probably for the rest of your life if you tune in and go to harvest.org and listen to Greg Laurie."

So, I would just suggest to everybody listening right now, make sure you send them to a ministry, an online ministry that has a salvation message. Otherwise, they'll just get a message that will tickle their ear, make them feel good for the moment. It's worthless. Don't even worry about doing it. Send them to a ministry, if you don't have a ministry to do that, send them seriously to harvest.org, and they will get a powerful message of salvation. If we would all do that, Jim, if all of your supporters would do that this Saturday night and start emailing, how many unsaved people do our collective audience reach?

Think of how many people we know collectively, all the unsaved. If we sent every one of them an email directing them to a church, I don't care what it is, but an online ministry that has a salvation message. We have the potential Jim. I was thinking about it this morning, hundreds of thousands of people could come to the Lord this weekend, this weekend. That could happen if everybody listening to us right now would just do that.

Dr. Dobson:

Let me take that one step further because this is the passion of my heart. I wrote in my book *Legacy: The Greatest Gift*, that for parents, the most important thing you're here to do, job one, is win your children to Christ. That exceeds every other thing. We want to evangelize the world, but we need to start with our own children, and now they're sequestered with us. We have an opportunity to pray about what's happening out here, to turn to the Lord, to show your kids that this is where our strength and our hope lies, and lead them to Christ. Wouldn't that be a wonderful thing?

Greg Laurie:

Dr. Dobson, over the years, you've talked a lot about the importance of fathers in the home and so many of our social ills today can be directly traced back to the breakdown of the family and specifically the absence of a father. So just a word right now to all of dads out there, you Christian fathers, this is your moment to rise to the occasion. You be the spiritual leader. You be the one that says, "Hey, let's watch this service on TV right now about Jesus Christ and let's pray together." And you be the one to initiate conversations around the family table about the Lord.

Moses said that a father is to teach their child while they walk on the way, when they lie down at night. You just look for those moments through the day, and what an opportunity. We've gotten stories back of entire families who are watching and people have told me, "My child accepted the Lord, my father accepted the Lord." They are literally having church in the home. Now look, I love church in person. I love meeting in buildings. And that's what I've been doing for 45 years, but hey, let's make the best of it. We kind of have a captive audience right now.

Roger Marsh:

This is Roger Marsh and this brings to a close today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. We've reached the midpoint of this discussion and we're actually just getting started. You've been listening to Dr. Dobson's conversation with pastor Greg Laurie, and lay ministry business leader Barry McGuire. And as you've heard today, we encourage you to stay plugged into your local church and worship from home this weekend.

Now, if your church does not have the ability to stream services online, Dr. Dobson recommends that you go to harvest.org. You can worship along with Greg Laurie's congregation there. That's harvest.org. Also, if you're looking for resources from the ministry that was mentioned on today's program, Revival Outside the Walls, we encourage you to go to rotw.com for Revival Outside the Walls, rotw.com. Thanks so much for listening today, and be sure to join us again tomorrow for the conclusion of this powerful discussion. That's coming up on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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