



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** 7 More Men And The Secret Of Their Greatness – Part 2

**Guest(s):** Eric Metaxas

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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.
- Eric Metaxas: When you read about the life of a saint, it just cannot help but speak to you. We need to study and learn the lives of people who've gone before us because we can learn so much more from looking at the life than from bullet points or teaching points. When you come close to the life of somebody who has walked with God, even with flaws, you just say, "Wow, I want to be like that. I want to be more like that." It gets me thinking about my own life.
- Roger Marsh: That was the voice of our guest once again today, Eric Metaxas, talking about his motivation for writing biographies. Many of the Christian icons that he writes about are great examples for us today. And with a startling lack of godly leaders in our society, we must revere those figures from our past. I'm Roger Marsh, and today on Family Talk, we are continuing Dr. Dobson's recent conversation with author Eric Metaxas. Their focus once again is Eric's latest book, *Seven More Men: And the Secret of Their Greatness*. Now, before we hear the balance of that interview, let me tell you once again about our guest. Eric Metaxas is a best-selling author, a prominent conservative commentator, and a nationally syndicated radio host.
- He is a noted columnist with op-eds appearing in The Wall Street Journal and the New York Times among other places. Eric also hosts Socrates in the City and serves as senior fellow and lecturer at The Kings College. Let's listen now to part two of his conversation with Dr. James Dobson on this edition of Family Talk.
- Dr. Dobson: Well, Eric, you've listed seven great men here, and we're not going to get through them all, but I'd like to start with one as we were discussing at the end of the program yesterday, had such a major role in the revolutionary war in this country as we know it today. And we're speaking of George Whitfield. Tell us why he is in this book. What did he do to deserve to be one of these great men?
- Eric Metaxas: Well, there are certain people when you write about them, you feel like you're writing about a cartoon character. Nobody could have done that much. But in

this case, it's just a fact. This man was an evangelist. I always joke around. I say he was a kind of an evangelist who makes Billy Graham and the Apostle Paul look like lazy agnostics in comparison to him. I don't think it's possible for us in our day and age to appreciate how much effort this man put into evangelizing. You'd think it would kill you and maybe it did kill him because he only was in his late 50s when he died, but he was extremely gifted as an orator. And initially of course, because of his popularity, he was the darling of everybody.

But then pretty quickly people got jealous. He would come to a church and pack it out like crazy. People would be climbing in the windows. Literally there was no room in the church because people heard that this amazing speaker is coming and churches began to close their doors to him.

Dr. Dobson: You said in your book that he faced bitter opposition, not from atheists, but from members of the church of England.

Eric Metaxas: Ultimately from everybody, and this is always the same story. We kind of act like in the reformation, we solved the problem of dead religion and now we moved on to everybody's born again, and that's not true. Dead religion will haunt us everywhere. Wherever we go, we have to keep the Holy Spirit at the center and Jesus at the center and that relationship with the Lord at the center. And it can go away. And so you have all these people going to churches and the church of England, of course the whole country is church of England. And so it becomes a rote thing. And so here you have this young man coming in on fire, his face glowing with the joy of Jesus and he's preaching.

And he had had an acting background and he was tremendously gifted. So the crowds that he drew, initially it was wonderful, but people got jealous. And then of course he had the temerity, I kind of think of the president sometimes. When you say the thing that everybody knows is true but everybody says, "You're not supposed to say that." Well, he began calling out some of the deadness that he saw in the church of England. And of course that didn't win him many fans in the clergy. In 1738, he's invited by the Wesleys, John and Charles Wesley to sail to Georgia because they had set up an orphanage there and they wanted him to preach in the colonies. So in 1738, he sails for Georgia.

And I neglected to say that he came to faith at Oxford while he was friends with John and Charles Wesley. They were part of this little holy club. The whole story is kind of funny because it reminds me of David Brainerd. You have these people that are so serious about God that they deny themselves everything and we want to admire that, but it can go too far. And so before he really has this born again experience, you have George Woodfield trying by works to get closer and closer to God, denying himself every kind of food, drinking only weak tea and then not eating anything. And so he-

Dr. Dobson: He wouldn't even allow himself to laugh, would he?

Eric Metaxas: Listen, we've all seen religious people like this unfortunately, haven't we? People who they're... They really don't get it. They think that laughter is of the devil. They think that anything that's wonderful is of the devil. And it's not like they don't have some point, but basically they get it wrong. And this is a man who was so zealous. Some of the story is very funny to me at least, he basically decides that friendship is so wonderful that he needs to deny himself friendship even with the Wesleys. Now imagine John and Charles Wesley, they're young men, they're serious after God, but he says, "Oh, I don't want to go and pray with them in that prayer group, I need to pray on my own."

And they try to explain to him, "Listen, we understand what you're saying, but you need fellowship brother. You need to be with us. You're going to kill yourself." And he was killing himself. It was a kind of madness, but he finally understands grace. And that's what launches him on this really unprecedented career of not just evangelism, but influencing the whole world through his preaching in the United States. I'll get to that in a minute. But the point is that he's been preaching for some time in England. And then the Wesley's who have gone on to the colonies, to Georgia, they invite him. So he comes and he preaches there. And by the time he goes back to England, he finds a lot of the doors are shut to him.

They see him as competition. They see him as a critic of what they are doing. And of course he was a big critic of what they were doing. He's calling people to the new birth. Well, what does that mean? That means that they've been going to church their whole lives and not getting it, which is pointing a finger at all of these ministers in the church of England. So one day Whitfield gets this crazy idea, "what if I were to preach outdoors?" I think it originally happens because there's a church that is so full that he can't even get in. And he says, "You know what? If I preach in the church yard, in the graveyard, if I stand on one of these monuments, three times more people will be able to hear me."

He starts preaching outdoors to thousands and thousands of people in England-

Dr. Dobson: Without amplification. How in the world did he do that?

Eric Metaxas: Well, see, this is what's so amazing. He was trained on the stage. He had a few years where he studied theater, but I think it was just a gift. And it's funny you bring this up because everybody says the same thing. It doesn't make sense. How can he preach to so many people? So when he comes back to America for the second time, he goes to Philadelphia. And who lives in Philadelphia in 1739?

Dr. Dobson: Benjamin Franklin.

Eric Metaxas: A young man named Benjamin Franklin who had established a newspaper and has all things going on, and Benjamin Franklin had already been publishing all of the sermons of George Whitfield in his newspaper because Benjamin Franklin knew that whatever this guy is preaching, it sounds good. We need morality.

Franklin understood that aspect of things even though he never became a theologically Orthodox Christian. He saw that when you have morality and virtue, which comes with this kind of faith, it makes the whole society better. He saw that. So he's publishing all these sermons from England. And then when Whitfield comes to Philadelphia, he's excited, he's going to meet him.

But I think before he meets him, George Whitfield gives a sermon outside in the middle of Philadelphia. And I think he's standing at the top of the courthouse steps. And thousands of people are gathered around to hear him. And the canny, Yankee, skeptic Benjamin Franklin, what does he do? Because he was a scientist as well. He says, "I'm going to figure this out." And he figures out son of a gun about 30,000 people. And so he actually tested it because he just couldn't believe it. He was too skeptical. And so you hear stories like this over and over and over again that Whitfield would go and preach in a field someplace. And obviously there's no TV or radio. There's very little entertainment. He was supposed to be tremendously entertaining on top of the fact that he's preaching the pure gospel of Jesus Christ.

So how the crowds were just mesmerized. They'd never heard anything like this. And I think what makes it so amazing to me is that all he's doing is preaching the gospel of Jesus, but these people had never heard it. And I don't mean the ones who didn't go to church. I mean the ones who went to church had never heard it. And how many of us today are going to some church and we're not hearing this pure message? And so people would weep because they never heard that God loved them. They would weep because they never heard that he died for them and he wanted them to be forgiven. They wept because he tells them in his word that they're equal in his sight, that everyone is equal in his sight. If you're a maid or fishermen, whoever you are, a farmer, you're equal in God's sight to any king, or any governor, or any magistrate.

This was brand new news to these people. And so they heard the pure gospel, many of them, of course accepted Jesus. And it changed the dynamic of the 13 colonies. Because if you have a bunch of people thinking, "hey, I'm equal to the king, I'm equal to the governor," suddenly you get this egalitarian idea that says, well, wait a minute, the king, and the governor, and the magistrate and all these people who maybe they act like they're above me, in God's eyes, they're not. In God's eyes, we're all equal. And that is part of what led people to begin to dare to think, "maybe we can govern ourselves." Maybe it's possible for the people to govern themselves. But there's actually another crucial piece of that. And this is where Franklin comes back into the story.

I write in my book *If You Can Keep It*, which we've talked about on this program, that all of the founders knew that for liberty and self-government on the American model, for that to be possible, you need people with virtue. And folks like Ben Franklin and others saw that when revival breaks out under the preaching of George Whitfield, what happens when a town or a city gets religion and gets Jesus? What happens every time alcoholism goes down, crime goes down, domestic abuse goes down? Something happens where the people can

govern themselves. Virtue comes into the picture, becomes part of that culture. That's when the founders knew, we have enough Americans who understand this, we have a culture of virtue and we can govern ourselves. That's the magic, that's the silver bullet.

And without that, we never could have had the United States of America because historically people hadn't governed themselves. As we know, it only happened one time and that was in 1776. And after that, of course, we all take it for granted. But if it hadn't been for George Whitfield, that couldn't have happened. And when we think about that, that an evangelist was that associated with this idea of liberty, of defeating British tyranny, that's a story from history. That's not Christian history, that's history. We need to be teaching that in our schools. The link between faith and freedom is unavoidable. Even if you're not a Christian, you cannot avoid it.

Dr. Dobson: Is it accurate to say that many of the framers were influenced by him and their devotion to Christ can be traced to his teaching?

Eric Metaxas: Well, that I don't know. Benjamin Franklin, for sure, to the extent that he was a man of faith, and to some extent, I think he was a man of faith. I think we criticize him because he wasn't exactly where we are. But during the constitutional convention, he was the one that called for prayer and said that, "I have learned that God is interested in the affairs of men." And he really had a relationship over the decades with George Whitfield. And so I know that Franklin's ability to do what he did as a founder was directly tied to Whitfield. And I think he's one of the ones that saw for decades that religion is a good thing. In other words, even if you don't know exactly what you personally believe, when people of faith are in a culture, that culture is a better culture.

He saw that. You can even just be a sociologist and you observe it and you say, "Well, you know what? I'm not a Christian, but I'll tell you what, the society with Christians, if they're serious about their faith, that's a much better society. The taxes are lower. They don't need to have such big government. They govern themselves. It's a beautiful thing." There's no question that many of the founders saw that no matter what they themselves believed. Now, let's not kid ourselves. Most of them were very serious Christians, but even the ones that weren't knew that without virtue and faith, this experiment in liberty never would have gotten off the ground.

Dr. Dobson: Well, John Adams, our second president, made it very explicit. I can't quote him, but he was saying in effect that people cannot govern themselves unless they are a virtuous people. And that has great implications for today because as we become more apathetic about our faith and people move away from the church, I don't know that we can survive as a people.

Eric Metaxas: Well, there's no question, Dr. Dobson, that we cannot survive as a people. And that there are tons of Christians praying hard right now as we're having this conversation, praying for this nation. And I think we're going to see revival in

this nation because you get to a point where you know that there's no hope but God. That you cannot legislate yourself out of trouble in every case, you need the miraculous, you need people of faith. And I just think that God's time for this nation is not up yet. I'm not prophesying that, but that's my deep sense that he is the center of everything that's good about this country. And I do believe that revival will come to this country again and that we will see a new, new birth of freedom because there is no way forward without it.

There's no way to get there unless you have faith in the middle of it and virtue in the middle of it, there is no America. So I think somehow by God's grace, we will get there.

Dr. Dobson: It may take a crisis, a great crisis to bring us to that point, it's not till we become desperate that we're willing to yield ourselves to the Lord and savior. Well, obviously he had a great influence on the framers. I've read that elsewhere and we have a lot to be grateful for. If it isn't too abrupt, Eric, let me move on to another of the seven men that you wrote about in your book. I'm referring to Alvin York, who was a hero in World War I. The only thing I really know about him was what I saw in a movie called Sergeant York. It came out in 1941. It was a black and white movie and it starred Gary Cooper. In fact, I believe he got an Academy Award for his performance in that movie. Tell us some more about Alvin York and why should we remember him?

Eric Metaxas: Well, that's another one of the reasons I put him in the book because I said to myself, "I barely know who he is." I watched the Gary Cooper movie, but there's a lot about Sergeant York that is interesting. First of all, he was a big sinner who got saved. And when he got saved, a little bit like George Whitfield, he kind of went overboard. Some people are so scrupulous. It's like our friends who say like, "Well, I can't vote. I can't vote for somebody who is a sinner." And you think, well, everybody's a sinner. And they say, "Well, I'm just not going to vote. And you know what? It's all going to burn any way." In other words, they're so spiritually minded, they're no earthly good.

You could say that about a lot of Christians sometimes. They get their theology out of whack. And Alvin York was one of those who when World War I came about, he was convinced simply because of the 10 commandments, it says, "Thou shalt not kill." So he says, "I can't go to war." Well, of course it doesn't really say, "Thou shalt not kill." It says, "Thou shalt do no murder." David killed Goliath. We don't say, "well, that's before David found God." It's a little bit complicated. And sometimes, particularly religious Christians, they get all hyped up on one or two verses and they forget the rest of the Bible. They get the context. And so here you have a man, a good man, Alvin York, who just plumb can't get himself convinced that it's possible to fight in a war.

Dr. Dobson: He was a pacifist, wasn't he?

Eric Metaxas: Yes, he was a pacifist. That's right. And so at some point, he is convinced to go and he ends up, because he was a Tennessee sharpshooter, he was in the

Backwoods of Tennessee his whole life shooting squirrels and all this and that. He was such an incredible sharp shooter that he, with outrageous heroism, was able to capture, I think it was 82 German soldiers single-handedly. This guy who five minutes before was a pacifist manages to take an entire machine gun nest to march all of these German soldiers as prisoners. And it's almost like a comedy. And I think if I remember correctly in the movie, it looks a little bit like a comedy, how did this back woodsman manage to do what nobody else can do?

So he became an incredibly celebrated hero. He got a ticker tape parade, but whenever anybody would ask him about what he did, because he was such a hero, he would always say, "It was the hand of God that guided us all and brought about the victory. I feel it was through him that I accomplished what I did." So he really did not give in to the temptation to say, "Hey, I really am pretty great." He just said, "No, it was God." He knew it was God. So he was a humble hero, a reluctant hero. And that's a lesson to all of us that humility, because he didn't want to be a war hero. He ends up being a war hero, but even then he uses it to point to God. And I just think that it's such an American story. We need to know these American stories, these American heroes.

And he was very well known. But as we were saying earlier, some of these figures, they kind of get passed by, whether it's our buddy Chuck Colson or Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. And I think every single American needs to know the story of Alvin York. So I just want to make sure that I put it in the book.

Dr. Dobson: Well, I do encourage people to watch that movie if they can find it. You could find it in classic movies from the past. It's a long time ago. I don't know. It's all black and white. And it's back when Gary Cooper was a superstar. And he continued to follow Christ to the end, didn't he?

Eric Metaxas: Not Gary Cooper, Alvin.

Dr. Dobson: No, no, Sergeant York.

Eric Metaxas: I don't know about Gary Cooper, but Sergeant York, absolutely. And that's what's so beautiful. He wrote an autobiography. There's a quote I wanted to read because he never really understood his own fame. It was a strange thing to him. And then he wrote in his autobiography, he says, "I know that if it was His will," the Lord's will, "He would even use war as an instrument in His hands." And I just think the humility of that, that he knew that he would put God first no matter what. And it's kind of an amazing thing because that's right before he made the decision that he would fight and he didn't know what to do and he put it in God's hands.

And I think it's a lesson to all of us. Sometimes you're not going to get the right answer. God's not going to just speak to you sometimes. Or you might want Him to, but He just - you're not hearing from Him. And you read the Bible, and you

can't get an answer and you just put yourself in God's hands. And you say, "Lord, I don't know what I'm going to do. I think I'm going to do this, but I just put it in your hands. And I expect you to guide me. If you don't want me to do it, you will block it."

Dr. Dobson: Well, we've been talking these two days, yesterday and today, with Eric Metaxas about his book, *Seven More Men*. That's a follow-up to his bestselling book, *Seven Men*. The subtitle here says, *And the Secret of Their Greatness*. Let me read the names of the men who are highlighted in this book. Martin Luther, George Whitfield, George Washington Carver, General William Booth, Sergeant Alvin York, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, and Billy Graham. I wish we had time to talk about Billy Graham. You've got some wonderful things to talk about him that people may not know. Eric, this is a good book.

I really want to encourage our listeners to get a copy of it and read it because we were only able to hit the highlights here, two or three of these men. This is a good read, an inspirational read, as is everything I've ever read that Eric has written.

Eric Metaxas: It's a privilege to be with you anytime, Dr. Dobson. I feel very honored by your invitation and your kind words. So thank you ever so much.

Dr. Dobson: Well, the red carpet is out my friend.

Eric Metaxas: God bless you. Thank you. That means everything.

Dr. Dobson: We'll talk again.

Roger Marsh: A fascinating and informative conversation about a few notable Christian figures from our past here on Family Talk. If you missed part one of this interview with Eric Metaxas, by the way, you can head over to today's broadcast page at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). Once you're there, you'll find a link to that program and also information about Eric's new work called *Seven More Men*. Now, due to time constraints, we weren't able to touch on all seven of these influential leaders. So we hope you'll get a copy of this book and continue learning more about them. Find all this and more when you go to [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) and then click on the broadcast button.

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time for another insightful program. Until then, I'm Roger Marsh. Have a blessed day, everyone.

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