



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Biography of God – Part 2

Guest(s): Skip Heitzig

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Dr. Dobson: Hello, everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, a radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and thank you for joining us for this program.

Roger Marsh: Welcome to another edition of Family Talk, a division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. On yesterday's program, we presented part one of an insightful interview featuring our own Dr. Tim Clinton, and renowned pastor, TV and radio evangelist, and author, Skip Heitzig. Skip is the senior pastor at Calvary Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and he has a brand new book called *The Biography of God*. In this conversation, Pastor Heitzig challenges all listeners with the powerful questions, "Do you really know God?" And, "Do you really understand who he is in your life today?" Let's continue that discussion right now on Family Talk.

Dr. Clinton: Skip, thank you for joining us again, talking about biography of God. What a fascinating discussion we had yesterday. Skip, I really want to recap what it means to understand who the God of the universe is and what that should mean for all of us.

Skip Heitzig: Yeah, it is a universal topic, Tim. You're exactly right. It is a consequential topic. And if there is a God, what is He like? Is there more than one? Is God male? Is God female? All of those issues that are current in the philosophy classes of our own culture. But everybody has to deal with it, and everybody, like you mentioned yesterday, has these big questions. Who am I? Why am I here? Was I created? Am I evolved? What does the future hold? And it's good. It's even good as believers to wrestle with those questions because I've never met a thinking person who has not had doubts and wrestled with doubts, even great apologists, even great theologians have theological doubts. And the more you wrestle through them, the more clarity you get on your answers.

Dr. Clinton: Yeah.

Skip Heitzig: I told you yesterday that when I was in college, I had a crisis of faith, several of them. I discovered unbelievers have good questions and unbelievers deserve good answers to their good questions. So I said, "I'm going to find the answers

and I'm going to articulate those answers." I used everything from the argument of design to fulfill prophecy to reason with unbelievers. One of those was a doctor in the emergency room who taught evolution at a college before he became a doctor. He grew up in a religious environment, rejected it, but through my relationship with him and discussions, I watched him make a genuine commitment to God, believing in the biblical God and the biblical Jesus. And he went on to do ministry as a Christian physician who taught in creationism after having taught evolution.

Dr. Clinton: Amazing. Skip, yesterday you mentioned about how we often have preconceived notions about God.

Skip Heitzig: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Clinton: Dr. Dobson taught, for years, and I think we would all agree, we often view God through the eyes of our father, how we see our dad is often the attributes we often place on to God, for good and bad. Talk to us about those perspectives and how they influence us in ways that can be harmful, and how it should motivate us also to really see who God is, high and lifted up, like Isaiah did.

Skip Heitzig: Yeah. I remember when Dr. Dobson taught that. I remember being in the car and I was starting out my ministry. I did not have a great relationship with my dad. It got better, but I had a rocky relationship with him. And when Dr. Dobson said that, it resonated with me. It's like, "Wow, that is so true." You grow up saying "mom" and "dad," and "mommy" and "daddy." And so, when you talk about God is your father, that very term begins to resonate and bring all that baggage to the foreground when you talk about your heavenly father, your heavenly dad. All I can say again is keep reading that book, keep reading that Bible because you'll discover that your father in heaven is very different than your father on earth, and even if he was a great father, and there's many good fathers who have been stellar examples to their kids, nobody's that good. Everybody falls short.

I remember when I had my son. I immediately called my father, and I said, "Thank you. Thank you for being my dad. And thank you for having me. I'm starting to get an idea of the level of commitment this is going to take. Of all the ups and downs we've had in our relationship, you deserve a wholehearted thank you." And so through that broadcast of Dr. Dobson, not only it was a revelation to me, it brought me on a road of reconciliation with my own father and to love him and forgive him because I realized no human can be like God.

Dr. Clinton: Skip, when you realize God existed and then you began to study the attributes, or the character of God, as they say, "There are no atheists in foxholes." We all believe we want God to be there, but we also want to believe that He loves us, that He's there for us, and that we can embrace that. Skip, teach us, what were you most blown away by or most surprised by, I guess, when you studied the attributes of God?

Skip Heitzig: Right in the early chapters of the Bible, He enjoyed fellowship within the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but He obviously wanted to expand the borders of that, the boundaries of that, and create other beings with volition, with free will and enable them to enter into that tight circle of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And He, God himself, got pleasure in that. That to me is like, "Wow," That's a revelation that God would even want to enter into creatures that he had made. David in the Psalm says, "When I consider the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained, what is man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you would even consider it." Especially as you go through that Bible and you discover that God makes people, and then they regularly fall and turn against him and sin against him.

Then you get down at the Book of Judges and there's this sin cycle where they keep repeating the same mistakes, and God is always there to send them a deliverer and bring them back and forgive them. When you see it played out on the pages of history that we are dealing with a God, not only is all powerful, but is that forgiving, and when we mess up, that's the kind of father He is. He's the father who will always be there, always forgive, always bring you back, and always let you serve him again. It's humbling.

Dr. Clinton: Skip, the word "relational" is in my mind here for a moment. So God is relational. Evidently, that's why you focus a lot in the book on the Trinity of God, the Triune God, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. There's a relationship there. And it says early in the book of Genesis, "Let us make man in our image." And we go into Genesis 2, where it just talks about it's not good that man be alone. He puts the same impetus in the heart of man. So this relational piece is what you're talking about.

Skip Heitzig: Exactly. That's why this whole pandemic of distancing is so against how we're made as human beings. We were never made to be alone. It is not good that man should be alone. So to tell a person, "You need to lock down and isolate and don't see anybody," is so against how we're made. I understand you do that for health reasons and it's temporary, but we have to understand we cannot become comfortable in looking at life through a Zoom screen or watching church online only. At some point, we're going to have to get back to fellowship with each other because we're designed to do that. We will not function well. Our mental health will be lost if we continue being isolated from one another.

Dr. Clinton: Skip, you teach. And let me go back to the Trinity, just for a moment. The Triune God becomes important because ultimately, we really compress into the relational piece then see the heart of God toward us.

Skip Heitzig: Yes.

Dr. Clinton: And that he desires a relationship with us too.

Skip Heitzig: Yeah, listen, nobody will unravel the doctrine of the Trinity, nobody will totally understand the doctrine of the Trinity, but you're right, we're not talking about modalism where God is one person, and decides to manifest himself three different ways. We're talking about three distinct and separate persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but one God.

And yeah, I do a chapter on that to unravel that a little bit, but really to appreciate the idea, like you said, that God is relational. So God existed, Father, Son, Holy Spirit from eternity past. God is self-contained. God is non-contingent. God doesn't depend on anything else. God doesn't need anyone else, yet He made a decision, and it's recorded there in Genesis, let us make man in our image. He made a decision to extend that sweetness of relationship that existed between the Us - the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - by creating a world filled with volitional beings who can choose to love Him, hate Him, follow Him, disobey Him, know about Him, not know about Him. And then when somebody says, "I choose God. I choose Jesus," then it becomes a volitional heartfelt relationship and something wonderful happens.

Dr. Clinton: So, the relationship piece with God, we're hardwired, you said, for a relationship with Him, and that's why our relationships here matter so much, because if we're in a relationship with someone who's supposed to love us and they don't love us, it absolutely is shattering

Skip Heitzig: And listen, that's part of the Lord's prayer. Even as I have a relationship with God who is infinitely loving, and forgiving, so I too, have a relationship with people who are not always good and are not infinitely loving, and I need to forgive them as I've been forgiven.

Dr. Clinton: Oh. Skip, there's so much to cover. I mean, I'm having a blast in my spirit because this is what life's all about. You get this piece right, it's the game changer. We often hear the Omnis: omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent, when people talk about God. You unpack them a little bit. Why are they significant? Why is it really important that we get that?

Skip Heitzig: Well, when you have a need and you are powerless, you want somebody who has greater power than you have who can meet your need. Paul even talked about we're crushed, but we don't give up. It's nice to know that you have a relationship with somebody who is all powerful, infinitely powerful, who's all knowing, who knows every part of your motivation when others don't understand you. And so God has revealed that way. That is who he is. He's all powerful. He's all knowing. He's all loving. He's everywhere present in the totality of His being. That's God's omnipresence. So, like David said, "I can flee to the utter most parts of the sea. Even there, your hand will guide me. I can't get away from God."

Dr. Clinton: No. That's comforting. It's also convicting and challenging.

Skip Heitzig: Yeah. But I mean, it's important to kind of do life that way, with that as a foundation, because in times where life feels like all the moorings are pulled away, you have a foundation that you can rest on. There's a lot of things in life that you just don't know. Why is there a pandemic? Why would God allow this? I don't know. But when I don't know things, I always want to rest on the things I do know. I do know there's a God. I do know He loves me. I do know He knows all things. I do know He's all powerful. I do know He's everywhere present. All of those things give me solidity in a very changing world.

Dr. Clinton: Skip, the issue of evil and whether or not God's just, often come up. I remember working, I was doing construction out in Montana one winter. This guy, I was working with him, I was helping him, he was the lead contract guy, and we got to talking about God's gift and he brought up the loss of a child.

Skip Heitzig: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Dr. Clinton: And he was blaming God because God could have stopped that, Skip. Do you know what I'm saying?

Skip Heitzig: Yeah.

Dr. Clinton: These kinds of issues become blocks in the embrace of God.

Skip Heitzig: You're absolutely right, Tim. There's stumbling blocks that have to be dealt with because everybody deals with it. Let me just sort of frame the argument for our listeners, if God is so perfect then why is His world so messed up?

Dr. Clinton: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Skip Heitzig: If that happened under his administration, then He's somehow accountable for it. And by the way, God doesn't shy away from that. God will even, in some places in the scripture say, "I am the God who did this or allowed this." We live in a fallen world because of choices that have been made before we got here. And because those choices have been made, there were consequences to those choices. By one man, sin entered the world, and death entered through sin and death spread to all men. So, one of the consequences of choices made in the past is that we live in a broken world. This is not what God originally intended the world to look like.

And one day, God is going to fix all that. One day, God is going to judge all evil deeds. And one day God is going to right all of the wrongs, but the unbeliever will say, "Yeah, but still, why is there evil now in the world? If God is so perfect and if God is so all powerful and God is so all loving, why are all these bad things happening? It must mean God is not all powerful, or He's all powerful but He's not all loving because why would a loving God allow these things to exist?" And so you go round and round with these philosophical discussions and they'll say the biblical God does not exist. I love how C.S. Lewis answered that question. He

came up with the moral argument, and C.S. Lewis said, "If the universe is so bad, how did people ever come to attributed to a loving God?" If it's that bad, then how do you account for the thousands of years of history of millions of people saying, "I believe there's a loving God." How is that even possible? So he sort of turns that argument around.

Here's what we need to understand. God did not create evil. God simply created the potentiality of evil, and the way God did that is God created beings with volition, with free choice. We're parents, we understand free choice. So we let our kids do things, even though we know what the consequences are going to be, but they have to learn those consequences. So part of the risk of making volitional beings is having those volitional beings make bad choices. That's the risky business of free will. So, our choices created evil. God cannot destroy the evil unless he also destroys free will. If God destroys free will, then God is not a loving God.

Dr. Clinton: God hates evil. He grieves at the brokenness in our world. I remember talking with Joni Eareckson Tada one day, Skip, and she was talking about brokenness, and I asked her, "Do you believe God weeps with us in our pain?" And she said, "Tim, I believe God does. But God will one day wipe all those tears away. One day, He will make things right."

Skip Heitzig: That's right.

Dr. Clinton: And He is in this moment. Skip, I wanted to ask you this. So in light of that then, what does God know about me? Does he know my fears and my failures? Does God know my future? Hey, does God even see my faithfulness? And does that matter to God?

Skip Heitzig: Yes, yes and yes. God knows everything about Tim. God knows Tim's strengths and God knows Tim's weaknesses, and God loved Tim before Tim was ever effective in ministry and had a worldwide ministry. So God loves you in your failure and in your weakness and in your brokenness. He knew everything in advance. So if you think about what Jesus knew about Judas, or what Jesus knew about Peter, he knew that they would be flakes. He knew that Judas would betray him. He even predicted it. He predicted that Peter would fail him, and yet, he invited them on his team, knowing what they were capable of in terms of failure and evil. That in and of itself should tell us something about the God that we serve. He knows everything about us, and yet He loves us anyway.

Dr. Clinton: Skip, you close out this book in a powerful way. To me, it's an invitation to a friendship with God. I mean, the thought that the God of the universe would want to have a relationship with me, even more a friendship. Skip, what does that mean to each and every one of us listening right now?

Skip Heitzig: The last chapter is, I'm using a guy in the Bible, he's the only guy in the Bible that God specifically calls his friend by name, that is Abraham. Abraham, my

friend. Abraham had a very unique encounter with God where he was allowed a level of intimacy that is very revelatory to us. To me, it's a mind blowing truth that the God of scripture wants to be my friend. Jesus said to his disciples, "I don't even call you my servants anymore. I call you my friends." When you think of God's friend, just think of that term "God's friend", that sounds like an oxymoron. How can you be a friend with somebody who's infinitely greater than you are? Usually, friends get attracted to each other by certain qualities they share in common. And so the idea of being God's friend, it's going to be a different relationship.

Abraham, as I mentioned, is called a friend of God. What does it mean to be God's friend? Well, Abraham believed God. So he trusted His word. Abraham worshiped God, Abraham obeyed God, Abraham was humble before God. And so I think that is a kind of a good indication of how, from an Old Testament perspective, we can be God's friend. It's not like he's the buddy, buddy old chum in the sky.

Dr. Clinton: No.

Skip Heitzig: Jesus said, "You are my friends if you do whatever I command you." So one of the ways we show our friendship to God is, "Look, I'm a friend with you. You know everything about me. You love me anyway, but the way I show my friendship to you, God, is by doing what you said, obeying your commands." That's foundational in being a friend of God.

Dr. Clinton: Skip, I want to close this way. There may be someone, maybe many listening right now who would say this, "But you don't know me. If God knows me like Skip said He knows me, then God can't love me. There's no way. There's so much water under the bridge Skip, I can't be a friend of God." What do you say to them? And to all of us, "Hey, if God knows my broken life, I have a relationship with God, but my life's not been the way it should be. I know I need to change my ways. What do you say to me?"

Skip Heitzig: Tim, I had a mother and a father who watched me get arrested for a number of things, including felonies, get taken in handcuffs and taken to the police station. I remember looking in my mother's face when that happened, and I knew that I broke her heart. I knew that I was a disappointment to her, but I also remember experiencing and hearing her love after that when I came back home and it was all done. And the kind of love, it's often said there's nothing like a mother's love. Mother will love anybody.

Dr. Clinton: Yeah.

Skip Heitzig: And I've had people say, "You've got a face only a mother could love."

Dr. Clinton: Right. We've heard all of that.

Skip Heitzig: There's something about a parent's love even when their kids mess up that much, and I had that experience. There's a God who made my mother, and the God who made my mother has even more love. He is infinitely loving and compassionate and forgiving toward us. God does know you the way you are. No matter what you've done, no matter what background you come from, you're not a surprise to God. He's not shocked by you. He loves you, and He's willing to take you as you are. You don't have to prove anything to Him. You don't have to do anything for Him. You just come as you are and you admit who you are. That's why we lead people in what we call the sinner's prayer. Lord, I'm a sinner. I'm sorry for my sins. I failed. The Bible says you have failed. If the Bible says you have failed, if the Bible says all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, why would God be shocked at you?

Dr. Clinton: Skip if I, even now, I prayed that prayer. "God, I'm a sinner. I need you in my life. I'm thankful for Jesus and what He has done for me, and I accept Him as my Lord and savior. If I pray that prayer, does that mean I become a friend of God?"

Skip Heitzig: You will enter into a relationship with God. God will wipe away all your past if you come authentically to Him in that way of faith, simple faith. You become a child of God. You are adopted, the Bible says, into the family of God. And the way adoption works in Bible times is all of the benefits given to a natural born child are given to the adopted child. God will see you like He sees His own son, the Lord Jesus Christ, perfect in righteousness, complete in every way. He'll bring you into His presence that way, and you will begin a journey, a process of relating to Him, of walking with Him, of trusting Him.

And you will discover a relationship of friendship that you cannot get anywhere else in this world. By simply coming to Him in faith and saying, "I admit that I'm wrong. I admit that everything you say about me is true, and I am willing to receive Jesus as the full and final payment for my sins. I believe that's enough. That's all that you require. I trust Him. I turn from my past, I turn to you," and you will become a child of God and everything from that point on will change.

Dr. Clinton: And if you prayed that prayer, if you've made a new, fresh commitment to walk in your faith for the rest of your life, we'd love to talk with you at Family Talk. We'd love to share in and celebrate that new life together. Skip, I guess this has all been about knowing about God, but now having a relationship, knowing God. We're grateful at Family Talk for you joining us again. His book is Biography of God. Skip, thank you for joining us and being a part of the broadcast.

Skip Heitzig: Tim, thank you for having me. Thank you and Dr. Dobson. Thank you for the team, staying the course all these years, showing what it is to love God and to stand firm on issues in a very topsy-turvy world. You've set the bar and the example for all of us, and I'm just honored to be a part of your team today.

Dr. Clinton: Well, may God continue to lead us all. Skip, thank you.

Roger Marsh:

You're listening to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. When Skip Heitzig, the senior pastor of Calvary Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico, described that very moment when the police handcuffed him in front of his mother, well, I can well imagine the crestfallen look of disappointment on his mother's face. But as he described the unconditional love, which she lavished on him no matter what, I was reminded of Romans 5:8. It says, "God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." And that was precisely what Skip Heitzig was underscoring as he discussed his new book, *Biography of God* today here on Family Talk.

To learn more about Skip Heitzig and his new book, *Biography of God*, visit us online at drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. While you're there, you can also visit that broadcast page and hear the entire program of today's broadcast, as well as yesterday's program, as well. That's drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. Thank you for standing with us and supporting us in the fight for families and for life. And be sure to join us again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks for listening.

Announcer:

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