



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: One on One with Bill Gaither – Part 1

Guest(s): Bill Gaither

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Dr. James 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: Psalm 59:16 says, "But I will sing of your strength in the morning I will sing of your love. For you are my fortress, my refuge in times of trouble." I'm Roger Marsh and our guest today on Family Talk might understand that verse better than most anyone. I'm talking about Bill Gaither, the legendary gospel music singer and songwriter and founder and leader of the Gaither Vocal Band.

To give you an idea of how much of a giant Bill and his wife Gloria Gaither are in the Christian and gospel music scenes, here are just a few of their accomplishments. Bill and Gloria's collaborations have garnered eight Grammy Awards and more than 40 Gospel Music Association Dove Awards. The couple are members of the Gospel Music Hall of Fame as well as the Southern Gospel Music Hall of Fame as well. In 2013, Bill Gaither sat down with Dr. Dobson before one of his concerts in Denver, the two reminisced and Bill answered a few questions about some of his fondest memories and greatest achievements. We're bringing part one of this classic conversation to you today here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello, everybody. It's a pleasure to tell you that Shirley and I are in Denver, Colorado at this time. We've come here to the Denver First Church of the Nazarene where our great friend Bill Gaither and his entire team will be on stage for another one of his legendary performances. My notes here say Bill is a singer and songwriter. That's like calling Sea Biscuit a horse to call Bill singer and songwriter. He stands alone and we've been friends for many, many years.

In fact, going back to 1976 and Gloria and Shirley and Bill and I have loved each other. We have been together in each other's homes and I'm telling you, their music still touches my heart. And I'm going to enjoy hearing you tonight. Now we're not in a studio. We're in a church. Bill is sitting across from me and we've got some panels sitting around us. I don't know what the sound is going to be like. And you can hear the musicians behind us I think who are rehearsing for tonight. So this is kind of an informal time, but Bill, I'm so glad to see you. You're looking great. You feeling good?

Bill Gaither: You know what? You know the old timer said, "I'm sitting up and taking nourishment." But I think I'm even better than that. These are good days.

Dr. James Dobson: Our careers and our work has paralleled one another. We were both born in 1936. I checked today. And we were married just about the same time. Shirley and I were married in 1960. You and Gloria in 1962. We began doing work that became very visible and very public in the late '60s. We came through the chaotic '60s together. And then in 1970s, we got acquainted in 1976. We met actually at Atlantic City. I was there to speak, you were there to sing. And ever since then, we've stayed in touch with each other. And I'm telling you, you have made an unbelievable contribution to the Christian community and to millions and millions of people. And it's an honor to talk to you tonight.

Bill Gaither: Well, you're very kind. And may I say on a given day, especially if dealing with artists, I've been somewhat of a psychologist. Not as good as you, but most of my psychology I learned from my dad and my granddad. But when you're dealing with as many artists as I've dealt with for the last 50 years, you've got to have a little wisdom in that area so.

Dr. James Dobson: And you're now dealing with seven grandchildren. That's not fair. We've got two. And so we haven't paralleled in that regard. Gloria's not here tonight because she is with those grandkids.

Bill Gaither: She's just at home having fun with two of the small ones.

Dr. James Dobson: Bill Gaither's written 700 gospel songs and won eight Grammy Awards and received two dozen Dove Awards so he's been at it for a long time. And he's released dozens of books. He and Gloria have written some of them together. And she and Shirley wrote a couple of them together. And now they have written a new book, a Bible in fact called the *Gaither Homecoming Bible*. I just checked. It's 1600 pages in length. A lot of that of course is the Scripture, but it tells stories and it's about how songs were written. And it's also written by your team, the Gaither team that performs.

Bill Gaither: The Thomas Nelson people are probably the largest Bible publishers in the world and they came to us several years ago to Gloria and me and wanted to do this. We were a little bit reluctant to be honest with you. We thought, "Nah, we better shy away from that." Except when they explained their reasoning. They said, "You have a wonderful following with the folks who come to your concerts and the people who watch you on television. And we think it would be an opportunity to get the Bible into the hands of people who normally would not pick it up." And when they said that, we said, "Okay, that sounds like a good ..."

And you know Gloria, she right away said, "There are several angles we can do here. Number one is talk about the importance of hymns and our tradition and how they tie into Scripture, the importance of gospel songs and how they tie into Scripture. And then secondly, these people who travel nightly and we'll be

doing a concert here tonight. And there's a certain thing that you can do in a couple three hours with an audience." But being an old teacher, Gloria and I spent our first eight or nine years of marriage teaching in the public school-

- Dr. James Dobson: And see, that's parallel too because so did Shirley and I.
- Bill Gaither: And you know there's one thing you can do when you come in for the evening and try to get people's attention and say, "I got some serious things here that I think could make a difference in your life and I want you to consider them seriously." It's quite another thing to have those students for an entire year. And I still have kids that I had in school who will come by and say, "Mr. Gaither, I had you in 11th grade English class, 12th grade English class."
- The last time I met one of my ex-students, he was a state trooper who stopped me for going 55 in a 45-mile zone who said, "Mr. Gaither, I had you in 11th grade English class" to which I said, "Oh, I hope I gave you a good grade."
- Dr. James Dobson: You know what I always did on the last day of school? I cried. I loved those kids so much that when they left, I knew I would not be in that kind of situation with them ever again. And I cried every year. I mean, it was so intimate.
- Bill Gaither: You know as a kid, I always loved music, Jim, and I wanted to do that when I got older. But I went to college and majored in English and taught in English, but I never put the music down. There was still something inside of me. That's when Gloria and I started writing and doing stuff.
- Dr. James Dobson: The songs that you've written have burned their way into my soul, Bill. I mean, they were familiar to all our listeners, but "Because He Lives" and "The King is Coming" and "He Touched Me" and "Something Beautiful, Something Good." Where did the inspiration for those great songs and hymns come from?
- Bill Gaither: Well, first of all, I grew up really respecting the hymns and respecting the great writers. I mean, Fanny Crosby. I mean, the great truth is in a song like that. And then very quickly there were some gospel songwriters, the old cowboy Stuart Hamblen who could write stuff about eternal values, not necessarily about heaven. But "Things like the things of earth will dim and lose their value. If we'll recall they're just borrowed for a while. And things of earth that cause the heart to tremble. Remembered there will only bring a smile."
- Dr. James Dobson: You know, I think we should never forget that the music that Christians sing ought to also contain a kernel of truth and theology. My favorite of course, is Amazing Grace, which has the unbelievable line, "'Twas grace that taught my to fear. And grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear the moment I believe." I mean, isn't that beautiful?
- Bill Gaither: It's just wonderful. And to let you know, I mean, yeah, we have written a lot of songs, but just recently my daughter, Suzanne and my son Benjamin, they were

all at our house. It was on Easter weekend and we always keep that free so that the kids can come home. And so, they were playing their instruments and there is a Scripture that I cannot get away from. If you follow Jesus very long, you obviously have to go to Scriptures like, "When you've done it to the least of these, you've done unto me."

And do I believe in outreach? Absolutely. And have Gloria and I tried to budget our lives and budget our finances to help those in need? Absolutely that I think is important. But there's another question that Jesus asked a person who begged for 38 years by the pool of Bethesda. He asked Him a very interesting question. "Do you want to be well?" So we got thinking about that and we said, "We need to write a song with that question in it." So the verse is simply and I don't the lyric before me because my daughter crafted this verse, but she crafted it very, very well.

The verse basically talks about the beggar being there for 38 years begging and then Jesus came along and asked him this very interesting question. And the lyric to the chorus is this, "Do you wanna be well, really want to be well? Are you willing to pick up your mat and help yourself? Do you want to be free, really wanna be free? If you want to be free and whole, you got to want to be well."

Now to me and you and I both grew up in a day where or theology was over here and psychology was way over here. And I think we-

Dr. James Dobson: Often it is like that.

Bill Gaither: And often is, but I think it's great when theology and good psychology comes together and simply says to a person who is not well, "Do you want to be whole? Do you want to be complete?" So that's the beauty of writing.

Dr. James Dobson: Bill, you and Gloria were my guests on the radio a long, long time ago. You've been our guests many, many times, but you talked about a song that day that I don't hear song very often. It's not as well-known as many of your others, but I think the title of it is "We'll Be There" and it had a great message. It was parents saying to their kids-

Bill Gaither: Making a promise.

Dr. James Dobson: We're going to be here. We'll promise we are going to be there when you want to come home, you'll find us together.

Bill Gaither: Yeah. You know what? This afternoon, there was a wedding here in this church. And as you get older and Gloria and I go to weddings from time to time and we hear all the wonderful promises that young people make to each other. And oftentimes not always, but sometimes we'll say, "They don't have a clue." And anybody who has experienced many years in marriage and my dad used to say that, and he and mom were married for 67 years before they passed away. But

there is something about a promise. And we wrote that for our kids because in this world, there are not many things kids can depend on. And I know sometimes it doesn't always work out that way. And it takes two to make a marriage. And I want to be very kind and gracious to those who couldn't make it.

But at the same time, there is still something about an old-fashioned commitment that says we'll be there when you first sleep through the night. We'll be there to care and hold you tight. For the first step you take. And I forget all the lyric because I used to say it every night. We will be there. I think kids still need to know that.

Dr. James Dobson: Hmm. Well, the meaning of that song for me is not only with regard to we'll be there for you, but we'll be there in heaven and you be there too. We will meet you there.

Bill Gaither: An eternal commitment and Jesus said it in a lot of different kinds of ways. But when we understand that, then that makes a difference in losses because losses here again are just going to happen. That's part of life.

Dr. James Dobson: Bill, of all the things you've done and there's been much. And there've been times when I've been on treadmill weeping like a baby listening to some of your homecoming music. But my favorite is a DVD that you did just a couple of years ago I think which was kind of a memorial to Billy Graham and it was done in a tent meeting. What was that? Was it a revival meeting? Is that what it-

Bill Gaither: It was called a "Tent Revival."

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Oh, that was a compilation of all the great stuff or much of the great stuff you and Gloria have done.

Bill Gaither: And Bev Shea was there that day.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, listen. I'm telling you, you talk about weeping. Bev Shea and Cliff Barrows interviewed each other and then sang a duet, and then Cliff got up and led the congregation in "Blessed Assurance."

Bill Gaither: "This Is My Story. This Is My Song."

Dr. James Dobson: That'll rock your boat. If you've got any Christian leanings inside or training, that will reach back and bring it right to the fore.

Bill Gaither: Well, our history with the Graham organization goes way, way back as it does with you. And they have been such a wonderful group of people. Cliff is just a delight. Billy wanted to be there that night, but his health would not permit it, but he said, "You've got to stop by the house." And so Gloria and I went by the next morning and we got him on camera and on tape doing this. And I think I'm

the only person that maybe has ever had him to talk about growing up on the dairy farm.

I asked him, "Did you actually milk the cows by hand?" And he said, "Absolutely." And I said to him, "Did you have cats in the barn?" And he started laughing. He said, "You did grow up in a farm, did you? Because any kid who has milked a cow hand has given the cat a drink straight from the source and the cat would spend the entire day licking the milk." And we got laughing about that. It was fun to see Dr. Graham.

Dr. James Dobson: Can people still get that DVD?

Bill Gaither: Absolutely, absolutely. And then Gloria talked to him quite a bit because he's always loved Gloria. And she talked to him a lot about Ruth because Ruth has been gone now for three or four years. And that was a real love affair. It's just great to see that love affairs like that can still happen in our day and time, but the whole experience ... I called Bev the other day, his birthday is on February the 1st so I always call him. I called to talk to his wife, but she said, "Hey, Bev's here. He wants to talk." 104-years-old. And he was kidding me about-

Dr. James Dobson: He still sings "How Great Thou Art."

Bill Gaither: He sang "How Great Thou Art." And then that night he also on in the Tent Revival sang "The Love of God" and just rattled the rafters, rattled the tent rafters. We did a Tent Revival there because Franklin had called us and wanted us to do something in connection with the library. And we said, "For some time we've been thinking about doing an actual taping in a tent." Because I can remember when we first started my brother, Danny and my sister Mary Ann and we would sing in a lot of the early Nazarene tent meetings as kids. And so there was something nostalgia about that to us. And so Franklin said, "We'd love to do it" because the big tent meeting that Billy had in Los Angeles was the first-

Dr. James Dobson: At 49, I believe.

Bill Gaither: Yeah. And that was a crusade that Stuart Hamblen was converted in.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that right?

Bill Gaither: He says, "I came home that night" and his neighbor was John Wayne. So he came home and he said he went over and looked over the fence and it was all over the LA news. And he said Duke said to him, "I hear you went forward at the Billy Graham meeting." And Stuart said, "Yes, I did." And he said John Wayne looked at him and said, "Stuart, I'm proud of you. I'm proud of you for doing that" because Stuart had a pretty rough life. And so, Stuart said, "I said to him, well, Duke, it's no secret what He is done for me. He can do for you." And John Wayne said to him, "You need to write a song called "It's No Secret." Why don't you?"

So he said, "I went home" and he says, "Bill, this is the honest truth." The chimes had one of those old clocks. So when he came in, the chimes were chiming 12, it was midnight. So, he sat down and said 'The chimes of time ring out the news. Another day is through. Someone slipped and fell. Was that someone you? You may have longed for added strength, is courage to renew. Do not be disheartened. I have news for you. It is no secret what God can do.'"

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, my I'm not a musician, but I love music and I love those songs. You still have the fire in your belly?

Bill Gaither: I absolutely do. Somebody said the other day, Mark Lowry, our comedian who's with us. He's not into the music as much as I am. And so he was telling a friend of mine, "I wish I loved this music like Bill just loves the music." And this friend said, "I wish I loved anything like Bill loves." I grew up on a farm there in Indiana and I can remember it was in the 7th or 8th grade. One morning I turned on the radio and there was a gospel quartet. I'd never even heard that sound before. And here were four guys with the piano and the pianist did an arpeggio. I got bit and I've been bit ever since.

Dr. James Dobson: You know what I wish you would do sometime? I don't know whether you've ever done it and I imagine you have. My mother's favorite song was "In shady green pastures so rich and so green. God leads his dear children along." She had a great voice. I don't know why I didn't get any of it, but she had a great voice. And that was her favorite song. Do you ever sing that? That song's got power in it and my mother had sung it in church one night.

My dad was an evangelist and my mother had sung that and people were testifying about how the Lord had been so good to them and had led them along. And one little lady stood up and said, "My son was in the war and I prayed so hard for him. And I begged God to bring him back, but God didn't see to do so." And they sang. They sang that song again for her that night. I wish you would do that sometime. I would love to hear you and your team sing it.

Bill Gaither: The one word that we hear more than anything else, Jim, about anything that we have done is thank you for your music or thank you for the song. And this song that you just mentioned speaks to that. It got us through. Maybe the most powerful word in our language is the word-

Dr. James Dobson: Through. You talk about that in this book.

Bill Gaither: Absolutely, absolutely. And that chorus, "some through the water, some through the flood some through the fire, but all through the blood."

Dr. James Dobson: Some through great sorrow.

Bill Gaither: But God gives the song in the night season-

Dr. James Dobson: And all the day long. My goodness. Well, I suppose it's too late to change the program tonight. One of these days you do that for me, will you?

Bill Gaither: We'll do it tonight. Between now and the concert, we'll find the lyric of that and I'll have somebody do that.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, my goodness. Bill, we only have this one hour together here before you do a concert and I'm not through talking to you. If you can spare a few more minutes, let's continue to discuss the things that are on our hearts and then we'll let our listeners hear that next time. Okay?

Bill Gaither: Okay, let's do it.

Dr. James Dobson: Thanks for being with us.

Bill Gaither: Thank you.

Roger Marsh: Well, that was part one of Dr. Dobson's classic conversation with Bill Gaither recorded back in 2013. Dr. Dobson and his wife Shirley had been friends with Bill and Gloria Gaither for decades. When Bill and his team were performing in Denver, Colorado several years ago, Dr. Dobson was thrilled to seize the opportunity to catch up with his old friend. Two of the legends that Dr. Dobson and Bill Gaither talked about on today's broadcast, Bev Shea and Cliff Barrows, both have passed away since this interview was recorded.

Cliff and Bev were staples at Billy Graham's revival meetings. Cliff was a longtime music and program director for the meetings and Bev was often the featured soloist. If you want to learn more about Bill Gaither, the Gaither Vocal Band and anything else Gaither-related, visit our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org. We also have a link there for the DVD video of the concert that Bill and Dr. Dobson were discussing. It was called "Tent Revival."

Our web address, once again is drjamesdobson.org/broadcast. That's DR jamesdobson.org/broadcast. Or if you'd prefer, give us a call. Our number is (877) 732-6825. Our team is available 24/7. To answer your questions about the JDFI, suggest a resource, or to even pray with you. That number once again is (877) 732-6825. And finally, feel free to write us, let us know how we're doing, how the broadcast is blessing you and your family. You can also mail in your prayer request as well. You can send cards or letters addressed to the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado. The zip code 80949.

Thanks again for listening to Family Talk today and be sure to join us again tomorrow to hear Dr. Dobson and Bill Gaither continue to talk about a few of the lessons they've learned through their years of success in ministry. I'm Roger Marsh. May God richly bless you and your family and be sure to join us again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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

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