



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Celebrating the Green Family and the 50th Anniversary of Hobby Lobby

**Guest(s):** David and Steve Green

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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:** I'm Roger Marsh, and this is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love. Thanks for making us a part of your day today. As Christians, God's calling on our lives is as unique as we are. Some of us are called to be doctors, or dentists. Some, like yours truly, are called to work in media and entertainment. Some of us are called to serve in the food industry while others are called to vocational ministry. Some have the gift of sales, business, or retail, but all of us, as ambassadors of Christ, no matter what our vocations, are all called to serve God with our gifts and talents. And that is the message of David and Steve Green, our guests today on Family Talk.

David Green is the founder and CEO of the beloved arts and crafts stores known as Hobby Lobby. Steve Green is David's son and serves as president of Hobby Lobby today. He's also co-founder and chairman of the board of the Museum of the Bible in Washington, DC. As you may know, the Green family are dedicated Christians, and they say that their Hobby Lobby stores are just "a camouflage for ministry." They want everything they do in their business to bring glory to God. Well, 2022 is the 50th anniversary of Hobby Lobby. 50 years of the Green family serving Christ through business and retail. Our co-host, Dr. Tim Clinton, recently caught up with David and Steve Green at the massive Hobby Lobby corporate headquarters in Oklahoma City. On today's program, David shares about his upbringing, founding Hobby Lobby with his wife, Barbara, and some of the triumphs and trials that they've experienced over the last 50 years. Steve Green concurs about the importance of stewardship and generosity when it comes to running a business.

**Dr. Tim Clinton:** Stewardship's everything to them. If you were to ask David or Steve, they would say it's God's company and they are stewards. Hobby Lobby is celebrating its 50th year of operations in August of 2022. It's come a long way from opening that first store in North Oklahoma City in 1972. Ironically, David kept his day job as a retailer at TG&Y, I think, until 1975. You could say that his wife, Barbara, had her hands full and ran most of everything for the first three years to keep it going. It reminds me of the old saying, "Behind every good man is a strong,

great woman." David, Steve, thank you for joining us here on Family Talk. Dr. Dobson so wishes he could be with us, sends his love and regards.

Steve Green: We're excited to have you here. Thanks for coming.

David Green: We're honored to be here.

Dr. Tim Clinton: This campus, I've never been to Oklahoma City, but my goodness, what an amazing city and what an amazing testament of what God's been doing in and through. And you're celebrating your 50th anniversary this year, is that right?

Steve Green: It is 50 years, August.

David Green: That's right. Yeah, 50 good years. God has been with us all the way.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Well, it certainly is breathtaking to go around and see, and I wish our listeners out there could see this campus, and how you are stewarding what God has placed in your hands. As we get started, David, I want to go back to you, talk about some humble beginnings. Didn't have much growing up. Pastor's kid. I can resonate with that. I was a pastor's son. I'd love to hear a little bit about that story and a little about your dad and your mom.

David Green: Right. Actually, I'm really proud of my upbringing and my heritage. There's nothing about it that I would change because ... My father and mother were pastors, and it was neat just to watch them and how they handled their finance and their prayer life, things of this nature. They taught us the work ethic. They taught us to tithe so many things that we were taught. And because of that, my background, I'm just really proud of my parents and my upbringing in that situation where back then, tithes from our members was more of gifting us things out of their gardens, or maybe you would get a chicken every now and then for eight people. That didn't go too far. But anyway, we were thankful for what God had done for us. He had always supplied our needs, even though my dad never pastored a church over 100, but God still was there for us and provided for us.

Dr. Tim Clinton: A lot of people talk about growing up as PK. You live in a glass house. But I know with my siblings, we pressed in together. We had to figure it out and in a lot of ways, God bonded our spirit. And even to this day, I'm very close with my siblings, but I heard that you had a number of siblings, and I think all of them went in to the ministry, except for there was a radical or rebel in the group or something.

David Green: Yeah, that was a big problem for me for a long time. I said, "What's wrong with me that God didn't call me in to be a pastor?" At some period of time, all of my five brothers and sisters were pastors, pastor's wives. It was a problem for me for a while, just because I thought, "Well, maybe I'm a second-class Christian because I'm not doing what they're doing, and God didn't call me into that

ministry." But we finally learned that this is where God wants us, right where we are.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah, and there's a whole ministry element right here that's unbelievable. As I studied the influence in your life, and I know you're very fond of your mother in particular, who taught you, really, the issue of stewardship and giving and more, but your daddy, I want to go back to him as a pastor. As you reflect back on your dad, my dad, we didn't have much. He gave us everything he could, but he was the kindest man I ever met. On Sunday mornings, our one church, average attendance, maybe eight or 10.

David Green: Yeah.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And he would preach like there were 10,000 people in.

David Green: Right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Never forgot that.

David Green: Yeah. I can't forget my upbringing and my heritage, and just watching my mother and dad in their prayer life. In the middle of the night, you would hear them praying. They were in the Scripture so much. One of the neat things about them was just how they love the Lord so much that they would tithe on their poundings. You would see them adding up what God had given them, what the value of whatever we were receiving as poundings and pay tithes on that. Some people might consider that being legalistic, but I never saw it that way.

I saw it as them wanting to really serve the Lord and do what they could for Him. And the other thing that really stuck out in my father and mother was their contentment. They were content where they are. I never ever heard them wanting more than what God had provided for them. So they had a heart of contentment, and also thankfulness. They were thankful for what they had, and so it was a beautiful thing to watch. And I'm sorry everybody could not have the parents I had because it was a beautiful thing.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Those kind of seeds, and maybe parents listening may think, "I wonder if my kids ... What do they see in us, and is it making a difference?" You never know when, somewhere down the road, it clicks, and they go back to that fidelity, that faithfulness that they saw. So hang in there, stay strong. This is one of those stories. It's amazing to me. Let's fast forward to business. You got called into retail.

David Green: Right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Everybody goes, "Oh, that's a challenging field," but you and your wife, Barbara, you met. You guys began making picture frames in a garage.

David Green: Yeah. We started with a loan of \$600, and in that, we bought this little chopper that would miter these frames. And that's how we got started in our garage. Making these little frames and then selling them to these various arts and crafts stores. And of course then, Barbara did most of the work because I had a full time job. So I always tell people that if it wasn't for Barbara, we wouldn't exist. And then our two boys were seven and nine and we paid them seven cents apiece to glue these frames together. Yeah, our beginnings was with a \$600 loan, and then also with a family that worked very cheap. It was child labor and kind of slave labor for a while, because Barbara wasn't paid for about five years after she started working.

Dr. Tim Clinton: A lot of people, they see the success. Hobby Lobby's now become America's home and craft superstore. It's the largest in the world. And they see all that, but they don't understand the price that was paid early on. The early days where there were risk, hard decisions, challenges. As you look back, anything stick out in your mind about ... These were decisive moments where God taught us lessons that were really critical to the foundation of where we were going, and we didn't know it.

David Green: There's quite a few of those. Sometimes, I talk about where the Holy Spirit talks to us, and I know the Holy Spirit's... That's really completely transitional in where we have headed, so there's been several of those in our lives that I know that the Lord was speaking to us. One of those times, and there's several of them, but one of them that I can think of early on was in 1987, when it looked like we were going to go out of business, to the point that the banks were threatening to foreclose on us. It was a very tough time, and I found myself under my desk praying, just asking God to deliver us from this. Because it was not just our family, but a lot of employees, so that was real pivotal in our lives.

I know part of it was God just wanting to deal with us. Without question, I was pretty prideful because I'd always gone only up and things were always better. And God wanted to do something much, much greater than where we were, but I wasn't in a position for God to do much greater because of my attitude. That was a very important time in our life just to learn humility, and I tell people that wasn't for life, you have to deal with that every day. But I reflect back on those times when I know for sure that that was what God was speaking to us about when our company just about went under.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I know you love your children. Your oldest son, Mart. Your second son, Steve, who is with us here, I'm going to come to you, Steve, here in a moment, and your daughter, Darsee, and their families. Children, grandchildren. I love that family focus, but I want to come over to you for a moment, Steve. As you hear your dad talking about this and, Steve, your responsibilities God's given to you and the giftings he's given to you, it's amazing. But when you hear your dad talk about those humble beginnings and the early lessons, what's in your heart? You've lived it. You watched him. You watch him every day.

Steve Green: Well, I think I'm blessed. Just the heritage that has been passed down from grandparents to parents. The example that they've set, I have been truly blessed. God says, "To whom much is given, much is required," so a certain sense of responsibility to take what has been given and continue as best I can to hand that on down to my children and grandchildren. But truly feel blessed that I can look back and see my grandparents that really didn't have anything, but had a love for the Lord, and how that has just been passed down.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Nearly 1,000 stores and an impact in culture. That's stunning. That doesn't just happen. I want to go back to retail for a moment. Something had to happen inside of your heart as a businessman where you saw something. At least what I read in business, they say that one of the most amazing gifts, or maybe the greatest gift in business now that leaders often think, is foresight. The ability to see something. And David, I'm going to go back. I smile because some of your staff was telling us that you come to the office every day. You ride around on a special bike that you have and you shake hands and kiss babies. You look at the store and you do everything, but there's something inside of you that you can look around and see something. You said retail won't work unless you love it. Take us into that mindset that you have.

David Green: I think God has built us all for a purpose, and I don't know that we have a purpose if somewhere, somehow, we're not bringing people to know Him. We see retail just as a camouflage for the ministry. We're in ministry and that's just nothing but a camouflage, the Hobby Lobby part.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I love that.

David Green: That's how we see it. God has got a purpose for all of us and I just don't think we have a purpose, or I have a purpose, at some point that I haven't brought someone else to know the Lord. So, we see ourselves as one that can influence others, hopefully, to know Him.

Steve Green: Well, tell him about the story of where that was somewhat clarified in your mind. When you were impressed to give a certain amount years ago, that helped you realize this was your calling, retail.

David Green: Yeah, I think sometimes it's really important to us when we think we're the second-class Christians to have a clarification that God needs to clarify in us what our purpose is. It happened to me one time when I went to a huge convention and there, I gave a dollar or two, I don't know what I gave, and it was for literature for all these different ministries around the world. They were taking up offerings. I don't know what I gave, but it was very little. But on the plane coming back, God had asked me to give \$30,000, and we didn't have \$30,000. So this was a huge time, the Holy Spirit talked to me, that was confirmational. Sometimes, we just need confirmation, and I need it as a black sheep of the family, so God gave me that by asking me to give \$30,000 and I didn't have \$30,000, but I knew he asked me to give it. Barbara and I, we prayed

about it and we said, "You know what I think we can do? We can write four checks a month apart, send them in for \$7,500." That's what we did.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

Wow.

David Green:

By the way, we got a call from the individual that was responsible for raising this money to give this literature to these various countries and said, "There was four missionaries that stayed over. We didn't have enough money to give them. And the day you wrote those checks, we know that God answered our prayer with those four checks." God didn't want me to write one check. He wanted me to write four checks for four people, and that was a confirmation that I needed to know that I am called not to be a pastor, but I'm called to be a merchant. That was very, very important to me.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

When God speaks, it's an important reminder. We need to listen and respond to Him. That faithfulness did something in your heart by the way it impacted people. Let me use the word culture for a moment. They say that culture is everything. I know in sports, a lot of coaches now say it's culture that builds a team and a championship-winning team. Culture seems to be a real word here. Speak to that issue of culture for us.

Steve Green:

When I think of culture, I think what makes for a good culture is unity. It's people that have a similar heart and mindset, and they are understanding, "Here is what our goal is," and we're on the same page, somewhat like fellowship. Fellowship is two or more fellows on the same ship. They're in this same battle, and that brings unity and togetherness, and that develops culture. There are many within the leadership of this organization. They understand the heart of our company, that it is the camouflage of ministry, and they're all in as well. That drives them to be the best that they can be. We have many employees that may not have that heart and they do a good job, and that's great and we want good employees. But what I think strengthens that culture is when there is an understanding of the real purpose behind what Hobby Lobby is all about, and that causes them to be all in as well.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

Years ago, I saw a book, I think it was called *The Customer Comes Second*. It was all about building a culture with your employees because if they got what you were trying to accomplish, the customer would really be first in the end.

Steve Green:

Well and when you think of the servant leadership model, to some degree, Dad has always said the corporate office here is built to serve the stores. The stores are there to serve the customers. So this servant leadership, our focus, a lot of times, here is how do we best serve our employee So there's a lot of truth that we have preached that for years. That's what we're here to do, is to serve the stores.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

Two fascinating things to me. One was you implemented a living minimum wage a long time ago. What's the minimum wage for Hobby Lobby?

David Green: Right now, January 1, we went to \$18.50 cents as our minimum wage.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Really?

David Green: I think we're one of the highest, if not the highest, but at least we're one of the highest in retail, because that is one of the things that we want to do. But there's a long list of things, hopefully, that we're doing with our employees. We have six chaplains here. We care about people in their area of problems. We have, even, an MRI machine in our clinic that we have. What else can we do? We have classes here on marriage and on raising children. Our managers out in the stores can go a weekend that we pay for their marriage, because we think that's very, very important, as far as to care about everybody's marriage. So what can we do to make your life better?

In fact, when we come together and we talk to our new hires, we always tell them that it's probably the easiest thing for them to do is to be successful at their job. But the harder things is marriage and raising their children, and we want an environment and a culture where that they don't have to work long hours like I always did. That's why we're closed on Sunday. That's why we're closed at 8:00. That's why we're only open 66 hours a week, because we tell them that more important than Hobby Lobby and their career, which is usually the easiest thing to do, we want them to be successful at their marriage. We want them be successful at raising their children, so that's one of the things that we do.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We're on the campus here of Hobby Lobby in Oklahoma City, and interacting with some of the team members, they said things begin to change around 3:00 in the afternoon here, and people are going home. I guess that family focus is, "Hey, you've got recitals. You've got to pick kids up or whatever." And that family focus for the employees resonates with them. It encourages them. This is a different time. This is a different culture. There's the pace and the pain and pressure of modern-day life that's ripping and tearing at families. And so if we don't anchor ourself there, I mean, that's the spin. What do they say? One of the greatest challenges in organizations of businesses is mental health and family-related issues. Is that right?

David Green: I think that is very, very important, and then we have to ask ourselves, "What can we do?" And that's what we're asking ourselves, is what can we do? We want to make sure that we're not falling short and really caring about the family. I care most about my family than I do this business. And if that's where I am, I should be that way about other families. I want to have the same care about their family as I do my own.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Fascinating read for me was your bold stand for God and country. I think around, is it Easter, you guys do a deliberate intent to buy ad space and talk about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And then on the 4th of July, you're very

patriotic and you're proud to stand in your love for this country. What brought that about?

Steve Green: Yeah, we do have, really, three times a year, at Christmastime, at Easter, and at 4th of July, where we'll do a full page ad and all the markets where we have newspapers. This is changing as newspaper industry is changing and doing more on social media, but it was something that we started years ago, and it's really because of Dad going through the Christmas newspaper one year.

David Green: Yeah, I was opened up and I think the Lord just touched our heart because it's Christmas Day and there's nothing in there about Christ and His birth. The Lord just touched us because we had an ad in there selling snowmen and whatever, so it just touched me that we needed to say, "This is the day that Christ was born," and we needed to do something about it. So since then, which it's been, I don't know, 20, 30 years ago, we've had a full page ad in every single paper. It's exciting to be able to do that, to remind us that He died for us and He's alive, so we're excited to do that. We're just excited that God allows us to do that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Well, I believe that God honors that. I do. And it is evident as you look around here, and as I look into the eyes of both of you. We're on the campus, again, here at Hobby Lobby in Oklahoma City, talking about the 50th anniversary coming up of Hobby Lobby, and the goodness and grace of God and how He has worked in and through this organization. There's so much more to talk about, including as a family, you are not afraid to take a stand, even if it was to cost you everything. We're going to talk about that on tomorrow's broadcast, how you made a bold decision. Didn't know what the outcome was going to be, but God did, and it has led you down to a strong path. And we're going to talk about generosity and so much more. Those key principles that God's been using to guide this ministry, I like that better than business, this ministry out here of Hobby Lobby. David, Steve, thank you for joining us. So looking forward to our discussion again tomorrow.

David Green: Thank you Tim for the time that you've spent with us. We appreciate it.

Roger Marsh: You've been listening to Family Talk, and that was the first half of Dr. Tim Clinton's recent interview with David and Steve Green, the father-son team behind the beloved arts and craft store called Hobby Lobby, with David serving as Founder and CEO and Steve as President. August 2022 marks the 50th anniversary of Hobby Lobby. Amazing how time flies. I love going into their store with my wife, Lisa. So many interior design ideas there and encouraging Christian art and decor as well. Now, David and Steve will be back again tomorrow to conclude their conversation with Dr. Clinton and to talk about some of the adversity they faced over their 50 years in business. And they'll reveal what the next 10 years might look like for them, their families, and their over 40,000 employees who are part of the Hobby Lobby family. So make sure you listen in.



In the meantime, if you missed any of today's program, or if you want to learn more about the Green family, visit [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk). That's [drjamesdobson.org/familytalk](http://drjamesdobson.org/familytalk), or give us a call at (877) 732-6825. We love hearing from you. Well, the month of July is almost over, and that means there are only a few more days left to sign up for our 30-day kindness challenge. This entire month of July, the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute has been partnering with best-selling author, Shaunti Feldhahn, to provide Shaunti's popular 30-day kindness challenge to our listeners. For 30 days, participants will practice real, tangible kindness toward one person with whom they want to improve their relationship, and they'll be guided every step of the way. Like I said, there is still time to join the challenge.

Kindness really does make a difference in our relationships. In fact, Shaunti's research has found the results of this challenge to be life-changing. 89% of relationships noted improvement when just one person participated in the kindness challenge. Now to learn more, and to sign up for the 30-day kindness challenge, go to [drjamesdobson.org/kindnesschallenge](http://drjamesdobson.org/kindnesschallenge). Well, thanks again for joining us today here on Family Talk, and be sure to listen again tomorrow for the conclusion of Dr. Tim Clinton's fascinating and encouraging conversation with Steve and David Green of Hobby Lobby. Until then, may God continue to richly bless you and your family.

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