



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: A Report from the Front Lines: Fighting COVID-19

Guest(s): Ken Isaacs

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

Roger Marsh: Hello, everyone. I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for tuning in today to Family Talk. We have interrupted our regularly scheduled programming to bring you a special broadcast. Over the last few weeks, the worst outbreaks of COVID-19 have happened in major U.S. cities. To combat the spread of this virus, various humanitarian organizations have set up mobile hospitals in these areas.

A few days ago, Dr. Dobson talked via video chat with a man who is on the front lines of this fight. His name is Mr. Ken Isaacs, and he currently serves as vice president of programs and government relations with Samaritan's Purse. Ken and his medical team are currently working tirelessly in New York City, one of the biggest hot zones in the country. He describes the conditions there on the ground and what their mobile hospital is doing for the sick. Ken also shares what Americans can expect from COVID-19 in the coming weeks and months. Let's listen now to this timely discussion on this special edition of Family Talk.

Dr. Dobson: I'm James Dobson, and I'm calling from our little condo in California where Shirley and I continue to be sequestered. I came here to write a book, but remain here to try to avoid the coronavirus, and I appreciate your prayers. Some of you have let us know that you're praying for us, and our prayers are with all of you. All of our staff members in Colorado Springs are working at home, and none of them has contracted the disease so far, which we're grateful for. Again, please be in prayer for them, too, because their families are involved, and of course you care about your own ministry family.

We're going to devote our program today to a very special report that you will not hear from the mainstream media. We're hearing incredible reports about humanitarian efforts from around the nation about what's going on during this virus. Let me share one of the stories that comes to us from CBN. This was just a couple of days ago, and it made Shirley and me fight back the tears.

“Hundreds of Christians surrounded the Cartersville Medical Center in Albany, Georgia. They gathered there to offer prayers and worship on behalf of the doctors, nurses, and patients inside. These well-wishers made a circle around the hospital, and they did that to raise the spirits and encourage those working tirelessly to treat the ill. People in cars in the parking lots raised their hands up and kept their hazard lights flashing. They listened to Christian music as they prayed. In response, the medical staff there gathered on the roof above and responded in gratitude to the people below.”

Their stories were just phenomenal, and I want to let you hear from one of the hotspots in New York City, where Samaritan's Purse is on the front lines of the battle. You've been hearing about what that ministry is doing, and I'm touched by it and I wanted to hear about it personally. I want you to hear from one of those leaders. He is vice president of programs and government relations for Samaritan's Purse. His name is Ken Isaacs. He's heading up the efforts with the mobile field hospitals. He's been in this business for 34 years, and I've met him on several occasions.

Ken, it's so nice to have you with us today.

Ken Isaacs: Thank you, Dr. Dobson.

Dr. Dobson: I want to know an overview of what in the world's going on there. You are in Central Park and putting up a field hospital. Describe it for us.

Ken Isaacs: Well, it is a hospital that we have developed over the years to deploy during earthquakes and for infectious disease like cholera, war zones like in the fighting outside of Mosul. We can do surgery in it. We can modify it. What we have done here is we modified it to be a respiratory care unit. It is a 68-bed facility, and it has 10 intensive care units, 10 ventilators. We've got about 65 staff here, eight doctors and probably 35 or 40 nurses, and an array of different medical specialties here that are involved. We sent the information about what our capabilities were.

We deployed one to Italy. We have one just outside of Milan, the same hospital, and we have about 65 staff there. About a week after we started that one, I sent information in to federal authorities that we had this hospital, we had this capacity, and I just let it go wherever it was going to go. They guided it up that "Well, we might need it in New York," and then it came down to New York City.

A man from Mount Sinai Hospital called me. We spoke for, I don't know, 30 minutes. I spoke with Franklin Graham, and we decided that we would work with Mount Sinai Hospital because they asked us to come and help them. We sent down that evening the advance team, and that was seven days ago.

Dr. Dobson: How many patients do you have right now?

Ken Isaacs: Right now, we have 13. Mount Sinai are bringing more tonight, and they have told us they're going to bring 10 more this evening. They bring one about every 45 minutes or an hour, and so we are expecting that we will overnight with 23 patients.

Dr. Dobson: How many physicians do you have there, and are they all volunteers?

Ken Isaacs: We have seven physicians, and they volunteer in the sense that they volunteer to come here. If you ask our HR department, they would say, "But you're paying them \$100 a day." But we're not compelling them to come, so they do volunteer to come. That's a small technicality. What we have found is that if we sign them up on our roster and they train with us, and then when we deploy them, if we pay them something, then all of our insurances work consistently across the board for them.

Everybody that's here is a medical professional or a technical expert in something. They have a lot of experience in infectious disease, starting with Ebola. When Ebola is the ring that you cut your teeth on, you're very careful about everything. You're careful about infection prevention and control, and you understand a lot about infectious disease.

Dr. Dobson: Is it accurate to say that many of these people may be putting their very lives on the line to offer this service and this help?

Ken Isaacs: Yeah, it's true. This morning at devotions, I commented to the team that we needed to lift each other up in prayer because there was a high degree of risk that some of us would get sick and that some of us may not make it through, and they know that. They understand it.

Dr. Dobson: How do you explain the willingness of doctors who have many other ways to use their medical service coming there at very little money to put their lives on the line to help other people? There is something there that's just got to be applauded.

Ken Isaacs: They come to help in Jesus' name. That's who we are. That's what we do. We want people to know about Christ, and we believe that the quality of our work is a platform of our witness, and what a platform we have here. We've been invited into Central Park, and that's like the sacred land in the heart of New York City. We've set this hospital up. The police department has poured in here and helped us. Con Electric helped us. Volunteers off the streets are coming here and helping us. They're bringing us food. Just an enormous outpouring, really, that I haven't seen since 9/11.

Dr. Dobson: Describe the scene for us there. We hear that maybe a third of all the coronavirus patients in the country are there in New York. Is there just chaos there?

Ken Isaacs: No, it's not chaotic, but it's tamped down. A lot of people are inside. The traffic is probably only 5% or 10% of what it normally would be. It's very light. You can get anywhere in the city quickly. Most of the stores are closed. You might find a corner store open every now and then, but all the restaurants are closed. I haven't seen any of those open. And the hotels are a problem because their staff have to stay home, so they don't have staff to even clean the rooms, and they're closed.

Dr. Dobson: Again, this is going on in Central Park in New York City. You guys are doing this elsewhere, aren't you? Where else are you operating?

Ken Isaacs: We have another hospital fighting COVID that is in Cremona, Italy, and that is the home of the Stradivarius violin, which I didn't know until three weeks ago when we were asked to come there by the Italian government.

Dr. Dobson: Ken, you've been doing this for 34 years? Is that how long you've been with Samaritan's Purse?

Ken Isaacs: Well, I've been with Samaritan's Purse for 31 years. But 34 years ago, I went to Africa on my first mission trip, and I just felt like God was calling me to the world. The Lord brought me into Franklin's path, and I started working with him. My family and I lived in Ethiopia for a few years. For the last 31 years, I've been with Samaritan's Purse, and I've been doing stuff all over the world.

Dr. Dobson: I've seen Franklin on television. You all are also putting up Gospel messages on Fox News. I don't know where else, but it's unbelievable what you're getting done.

Ken Isaacs: That's who we are. We're about the Gospel, so we take every opportunity to share Christ. But at the same time, we don't want to coerce anybody. We don't want to be mean or rude or anything like that, but we don't hide who we are. We find that by doing a good, professional job, it doesn't matter if it's treating people who are sick with COVID or if it is handing out food to hungry people or drilling wells of clean water, we want to do a good job, and we have found that people like that. They like to be treated with respect and dignity. It's really the model of the Samaritan, so we stick with that and it works pretty good for us.

Dr. Dobson: Are your patients grateful for what you're doing?

Ken Isaacs: I'm sure that they are. They're pretty sick when they come in to us, and so I haven't talked to any of the patients. They bring them in by ambulance and they're unloaded in a screen. We've put up privacy screens to protect people's privacy. There's TV cameras, Dr. Dobson, all around the place here. I'm sure that they will be thankful. They will receive the most attentive and advanced care possible. But I can tell you the city of New York is grateful. People thank us everywhere that we go, and we're deeply touched by it.

Dr. Dobson: Well, that's why we're calling today. I wanted to say thank you to all of you. How many physicians are associated with Samaritan's Purse? I spoke there several years ago, and I think there were more than 150 doctors that were there at that time. How many of them are deployed around the world?

Ken Isaacs: Well, every year, in a normal year, and this is not a normal year because there's no international air transport now, but in a normal year we probably send about 1,100 out to mission hospitals around the world. They serve as volunteers. But now they have all come back. They're in the U.S. Their trips had been canceled because flights have been canceled. What we're doing is proposing that they see the mission field as here in the United States, and with that, we've got this hospital running up here. We're looking at doing more things in New York as well as other parts of the U.S. to see if we can do more. We want to help all that we can.

Dr. Dobson: What do you know about what's going on over in the Javits hospital arena? They're really overwhelmed, aren't they?

Ken Isaacs: Well, I have been asked to go over there. In fact, somebody just called me right now since I was talking to you, and I switched the phone off. I think it's one of the FEMA people. We're in a conversation with them to see if we can help there. Right now, this hospital in Central Park, we're in with Mount Sinai. We have a great relationship with them, and they are just wonderful people, very supportive and very grateful. They have really moved heaven and earth out here. Can you imagine putting a hospital in Central Park?

Dr. Dobson: How long did it take to get that constructed?

Ken Isaacs: It took about two and a half days, the whole thing.

Dr. Dobson: I can't believe that.

Ken Isaacs: Yeah, two and a half days.

Dr. Dobson: Did you have the materials and everything all set to go? How in the world did you pull that off?

Ken Isaacs: Well, we prepare in advance. We had the materials and supplies in one of our warehouses down in North Carolina. Before we even had a site located, we loaded the hospital up, and it started driving down the road eight hours before we knew where it was going to land at and where the trucks would pull to. We were surprised that it was here at Central Park, but the reason that it's located here, it's right across the street from the main Mount Sinai Hospital. So for consistency of care and for access for Mount Sinai, for the ambulances coming in and everything, it's very convenient. It's right across the street.

Dr. Dobson: You and I are communicating by Skype, I guess. I see you, and I'm sure you see me. You're wearing a mask. Are you doing that all day long?

Ken Isaacs: Yes, all day long.

Dr. Dobson: I want you to stay safe. I'm telling you, I just reach out and put my arm around you and all of your colleagues for what you're doing for suffering people, really, around the world.

Ken Isaacs: Thank you. This is the famous N95 mask that you hear about all over the news that are in shortage in the world, and certainly shortage in this country. But yes, I wear it. The only time I take it off is when I need to drink something or eat. But other than that, when I'm around people, I wear it.

Dr. Dobson: Well, it really illustrates the danger that all of you all are in. I said how much I appreciated the doctors and the nurses who are working there in the medical staff, but that goes to you too, Ken. You have a heart for the Lord, don't you?

Ken Isaacs: Yeah. I want other people to know it. I trust Him. My wife wasn't real hot about me coming up here. First, she said she wanted to come with me, and I said, "You can't do that." But by the end of the day she said, "I support you. You've got to go," so that's good.

Dr. Dobson: How long do you plan to be there?

Ken Isaacs: I'll probably be here maybe two more weeks.

Dr. Dobson: Do you think that is how long the facility will be required?

Ken Isaacs: No. I think the facility is going to be needed here probably for two months, could be three months.

Dr. Dobson: That's kind of breathtaking. That has implications for all of us.

Ken Isaacs: Yep. Nobody's going to escape this. What you're seeing right now, people worrying about being in quarantine and isolation, and what do all those definitions mean, and the rules and the policies of the local health department, but what's going on is this disease is absorbing itself into our society and into our world, and we are feeling the impact of it as mankind. Some people, it's taken their lives. Some people, it's damaging their bodies. And some people just bounce right back; it's like it's not a big deal. But the effects of it economically, the effects of it if you count dead bodies, the effects of it if you sense the fear around the world, this is something of biblical proportions in a way.

Dr. Dobson: Well, the Bible talks about plagues and pestilences and so on. I don't know where this fits into that. Just now, Shirley brought me a note to ask you a

question. Do you have any exciting news about other drugs and other medical procedures that may help truncate this crisis?

Ken Isaacs: I wish I did, but I don't. I saw an article just about an hour ago that Mayo Clinic thinks that it will have a serum to start testing. I don't know if that's an antibody serum. I think it is, but it's leading into a pathway of a vaccination. They're talking about within a month, but I don't know what that means. Right now, I think that anybody that gets sick, they're going to have to take care of themselves at home. We're being told not to go to hospitals because the hospitals are overwhelmed. I wish I had good news, but I don't have good news on that front.

Dr. Dobson: You heard me say in my introduction that there are Christian expressions all over the country. This is having an effect on the Christian community, isn't it?

Ken Isaacs: It is having an effect on the Christian community. People aren't going to church. We're all getting online now. Our bandwidth is being absorbed. So when we're talking to somebody on the phone, it's a little bit slower. When you're trying to google something, it's a little bit slower. But it's changing our lives in so many ways. We have people at our regular field offices in over 20 countries. They're stuck there. They can't get out now. Honestly, for some of them, it's safer to stay there than it is to come back here because this disease has not run its course yet here.

Dr. Dobson: Shirley and I had been praying about this, and our prayer, in addition to praying for all the hurting people and some of them dying, is with regard to the possibility of a spiritual awakening that will cross the country. Wouldn't it be something if we had another third Great Awakening of spiritual fervor? America has drifted so far from its foundation and its beliefs. The churches many times are either not flourishing or the Gospel is not being taught in some places. I just pray that the Lord will use this in bringing so many people back to the Lord. That's really what you guys are all about, isn't it?

Ken Isaacs: We want to show the love of Christ in word and in deed. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the whole story started out because a man of the law asked Jesus, "Rabbi, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Then Christ said, "What do the scriptures say?" "Love the Lord God with all your heart, your mind, and your soul, and love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus said, "Well, do that, and you'll have eternal life."

Then the man tried Jesus again. He said, "Well, who's my neighbor?" Then Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan. When the Samaritan went to the man in the ditch, he didn't ask him anything. He didn't ask him who he voted for. He didn't ask him who he believed in. He didn't ask him who he slept with. He didn't ask him anything. He helped him. He bandaged his wounds. He put him on a horse. He took him to the inn. He took care of him. And he left two coins and told the innkeeper, "I'll be back and pay you if I owe you more."

Then the answer was "Which one was a good neighbor?" The man of the law said, "The one who had mercy." Jesus said, "Go and do likewise."

When I talk about word and deed, that's what I'm saying, is that we want to help people in need, and we do it for the sake of the Gospel, but we also feel that people need to hear it. It's not just an issue of action, but it's an issue of words as well. That's who we are, and that's what we do. We don't hide that.

Dr. Dobson: I wish on behalf of many, many people listening to us, who knows, there may be hundreds of thousands, and those that know you and know of your work in the Samaritan's Purse, and certainly Franklin Graham, on their behalf, I would like you to tell those sacrificial people, those that are putting their lives on the line to help those who can't help themselves, that we appreciate it, we're praying for them, and we love them, and we ask that God would bring them through this crisis and indeed bless the United States of America.

Ken Isaacs: Thank you. I'll share that message with them.

Dr. Dobson: Ken Isaacs, thank you for taking this time with us. I know you're extremely busy. You have to be, putting up an entire hospital in two or three days and then starting to receive patients and all the operations that that requires. I just want you to know you're my brother, I appreciate you and appreciate what you're doing. And Franklin and all of them, please do tell them how much we love and appreciate them.

Ken Isaacs: I will do that.

Dr. Dobson: Ken, is there anything that you and your team need, anything that those listening to us can help you with, other than prayer and, I'm sure, resources. Who's paying the bill for all this?

Ken Isaacs: Well, we definitely need prayer and we covet prayer. We wouldn't be able to do the things that we do if people didn't pray for us. We're commanded in God's Word to lift up our concerns in prayer. If people want to know about what we're doing or how they can support us, they can go to our website at samaritanspurse.org, one word, samaritanspurse.org. They can get daily updates there. There's articles there. If they want to get involved, there's a button there to get involved. Click on that. If they're interested to serve with us, that'll get them there. We need medical licensed people, everything from a nurse attendant to an anesthesiologist to respiratory therapists. We need them all. That would be the place to go, samaritanspurse.org

Roger Marsh: A truly fascinating report from the front lines of the current COVID-19 crisis here in America. Dr. Dobson's guest today on Family Talk has been Ken Isaacs, vice president of programs and government relations with Samaritan's Purse. To learn more about Samaritan's Purse and their mobile hospitals combating this virus, go to drjamesdobson.org. Once you're there, you can also request a CD

copy of this insightful interview as well. You'll find all of this when you go to Today's Broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org.

We also encourage you to stay connected with us on Facebook during this COVID-19 crisis. We are continuously posting meaningful updates, along with passing along uplifting and encouraging resources just for you. You can find our profile by searching for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Center in on the hope and joy during these trying times and follow us on Facebook today.

In closing, I want to remind you that the James Dobson Family Institute is completely listener supported. The only way we're able to bring you relevant programs like the one you just heard is through your generosity. Please know how much your help and support during this special time means to us here at James Dobson Family Institute.

Well, that's all the time we have for today. Be sure to tune in again next time for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Have a blessed and safe day.

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

Dr. Tim Clinton: This is Dr. Tim Clinton, executive director of the James Dobson Family Institute. Thanks for listening today. We hope you found this program helpful and encouraging. Please remember that our ministry is here to serve you and your family. For more information about our programs and resources, or to learn how you can support us, go to drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. Or call us toll free, 877-732-6825.

I pray that God will bless you in 2020. We're so grateful for your partnership. We ask you to stand with us and to continue to defend the Christian values in an ever-changing culture. Thanks again for joining us. We hope you'll join us again on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.