



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Biography of God – Part 1

Guest(s): Skip Heitzig

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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: Welcome to another edition of Family Talk, a division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. It's safe to say that Skip Heitzig does not have your normal testimony. Growing up in Southern California, he strayed as many teenagers do, and he questioned everything. He was anything but your typical Christian kid, but on his 18th birthday, God ordained for Skip to watch a Billy Graham crusade on TV. Not only did he repent of his sins, but he was discipled, by mail, through Mr. Graham's ministry. 48 years later, Skip Heitzig is now the senior pastor of Calvary Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico. And he's written a brand-new book entitled, *Biography of God*. Let's listen to his conversation now with our own Dr. Tim Clinton on this special edition of Family Talk.
- Dr. Clinton: I, along with many of you I'm sure, have loved ones who don't know Jesus. Coming out of the holiday season, I bet there was a tense moment or two around the dinner table as you talked about faith, politics and worldviews. Or maybe there was an important or difficult conversation about your relationship with God. The apostle Paul said that we need to be ready to answer about the hope that lies deep within us. In a world overwhelmed by chaos, especially during this pandemic and the civil unrest and more, people all around us are looking for answers. One thing is clear right now. We need each other more, not less, and we really need God, more of Him. That's why today we're going to talk about knowing what it means to embrace the heart of God in our everyday lives. Understanding and embracing who he is, is everything. Our special guest is pastor Skip Heitzig of the famed Calvary Albuquerque Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Skip's newest book is out now, *Biography of God*. Skip, I'm eager to talk with you about the insights from this book. Welcome back, and thank you for joining us.
- Skip Heitzig: Thank you, Tim. I always love what you do. And of course, I've been influenced by Dr. Jim Dobson. He has set the trajectory for me raising my son who is with me in ministry. So, I credit a lot of the things I've learned and taught him

through Dr. Dobson's ministry. So it's a thrill to be with you, Tim, and a part of this great network.

Dr. Clinton: As we get started, Skip, everybody loves a story. I want to go back. You were raised as a boy in a Catholic home, kind of got lost in the journey of life through your teen years, got involved in some heavy drug use, even dabbled with the occult. That stops everybody for a moment. Really, it speaks to the search of your own heart. Doesn't it?

Skip Heitzig: Exactly. And this new book is all about my own search as well as a number of other things about God principally. But I grew up in Southern California and the one word that would describe my life was the word experimental. I experimented. I wanted to try new things. And so I just wanted to find out what is real. If God is real, if there even is a God. I think my journey would be from church believer, that is I believed in God generally. And then I went from that to an unbeliever, because I went to school, went to high school, went to college, did some medical training at UCLA.

And then I went from unbeliever to biblical believer. I look at the evidence. I had a radical change in my life, but up until that time, I was trying everything from getting stoned on LSD and going to church, the Catholic church and watching the altar boys fly up in the air along with the priest, to all sorts of occultic activities that my friends were getting involved in. Astral projection, spirit writing, autohypnosis, all different avenues I could experience something. I wanted to experience something real other than just what I was taught to believe or know in my head.

Dr. Clinton: It's amazing how God works in our lives. Skip, you wound up, I think, going to a Billy Graham crusade, what? About age 18?

Skip Heitzig: Yeah.

Dr. Clinton: And you had an encounter with God.

Skip Heitzig: Up to that point, by 17 years of age, I had tried so many different things and I was not going to a crusade. I was at my brother's apartment in San Jose, California. And it was right after high school. I turned on the television. Billy Graham was broadcasting a crusade, I believe from Seattle at the time, but it was a telecast and I was alone. And I thought, "My dad always told me that Billy Graham was really good at speaking to an audience. And if you want to learn how to speak to an audience, watch Billy Graham." That's what he told me. So I was watching Billy Graham and as I listened to him, I didn't expect to feel what I felt. And by the end of the broadcast, when he was calling people down on the field to make a public commitment to Christ, I even had this thought in my mind. I thought, "Boy, I'm glad I'm watching this by television. Because if I was in that stadium, I would go down and make the same commitment."

Dr. Clinton: Wow!

Skip Heitzig: And as soon as I thought that, Billy Graham, as he always used to do, turned toward the television cameras and addressed the audience. And he said, "If you're watching by television, you can know Christ." And it was like, "Ah." I was spooked by it. It's almost like he read my mind and spoke directly to me. So I turned the television off, went into my bedroom and just had a chat with God. I told him, "I don't know what this means. I don't really know who you are, but I know that I'm a sinner. And if you're real, I want you to make yourself known to me and I believe in Jesus." It was a very simple prayer like that. And things changed on that day and every day thereafter.

Dr. Clinton: It's an amazing story. Skip, you and your wife, you wind up getting trained by Chuck Smith, Calvary Chapel, decide to go do a church plant, Albuquerque, New Mexico, five people. You start with five people and it explodes. You have a huge multimedia platform now. Television, radio, you're on the board of directors at Samaritan's Purse, Harvest Christian Fellowship, our good friends there. Skip, could you have imagined what God might be writing into your life?

Skip Heitzig: No, I really did not know. I just wanted to follow what God had for me. And it's like when you get on a wave, it's fun and it carries you in the direction that you can't really decide where you're going to go, the waves going to take you. So, my ministry experience is like getting on a wave that keeps cresting and keeps building. And it's so fun. And you drop in and you don't know where it's going to turn and go. And this has been the biggest, most exciting wave of I've ever ridden.

Dr. Clinton: Skip, the 2020 insanity from the pandemic to the civil unrest, the election mess, so much more. I think a lot of people began pressing in a direction that they maybe hadn't gone before. And that was really wrestling with eternity, wrestling with God, who are you? And dealing with the losses and so much more. They started looking inward and upward. I'm not saying they found him, but in the midst of this, you pen a book called *Biography of God*, to tell us who he is, to teach us. Because if we don't figure that piece out, Skip, we are lost.

Skip Heitzig: You're right. And I wrote the book because, and I gave it that title, *Biography of God*, because this is the most important issue ever. The issue of God, there's nothing more consequential in life than the issue of God. And it has consequences now and in eternity. So, look, everybody has some concept about God and I had my own concept about God, but you can't ignore the study of God. J.I Packer once said, "If you ignore the study of God, you are consigning yourself to a miserable existence."

Dr. Clinton: Yeah. Skip, when you look at the everyday lives of people, in light of what you know about God, and you see how they live out their lives, what they're reaching for to satisfy the emptiness, Skip, it begins to make sense that the man knocking on the door of the harlot, as they say, is really looking for God. There's a longing deep inside of us.

Skip Heitzig: There is a longing, and God put that longing. He hardwired us that way, or he put it in the software, at least. And to me, this is the most amazing quality about God that I've discovered, is that once you realize who God is, he's not like just another dude. He's not another guy. He's not the big guy in the sky. When you understand how the Bible reveals God as being unique and Holy and et cetera, all powerful. Why would he be willing to love me or walk with me or have any kind of relationship with me at all? That kind of accessibility is to me the most stunning attribute that I find, that He condescended to find us. And that's astonishing to me.

Dr. Clinton: Skip, teach us. Hebrews 11:6, "But without faith, it's impossible to please him, for those who come to God must first believe that he is and that he's a rewarder of those who diligently seek him." I guess, maybe to begin, Skip, here would be, there's a difference between knowing about God... I know a lot of people who know about God. I know a lot of people who think they know God, but they just know about him. They don't really know him.

Skip Heitzig: Yeah. So, I grew up that way. I grew up knowing about God. Even said, as a child, "I think I know God." But the biblical God, I did not know, because I never read the Bible. So it's like, there's this concept of God presented. And when people say, "I picture God as being this or that." Or, "I've always thought of God in this fashion or that." What they're essentially doing is worshiping a God they made in their image.

Dr. Clinton: Sure.

Skip Heitzig: So when you read the Bible, you're not reading imagination, you're now looking at revelation. If you say, "I picture God as this and I worship that God." Now you're working off imagination and that's idolatry. When you go by what the Bible says, God is, and you worship that God, now that's based on revelation. It's a completely different way of doing life. So I went on that journey and the God I discovered was massively different than how he was presented to me in the church I was raised in, the Catholic church I was raised in. It was ritual. And it was nothing really more than that. And when I first came to Christ and carried my Bible into that church, they looked at me and the usher said, "What are you doing with that thing in here? Why are you bringing a Bible in the church?"

Dr. Clinton: Really?

Skip Heitzig: I noticed the divine. I'm not saying that's that way now or in all Catholic church. I know many Catholics who know the Lord, but my experience was, I didn't find him in that construct. And the God of the Bible was vastly different.

Dr. Clinton: Before talking about a relationship with God, I think everybody needs to ask and answer the question, does God exist? Skip, you did that. You took a look at what the Bible says, but you also looked at science, you looked at philosophy. What did you find out?

Skip Heitzig: Yeah, you hit on a very key text. You have to believe that he is, and that he's a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. I had a crisis of faith when I was in college. I came to Christ. It was a real commitment after the Billy Graham incident and my first day of college, I had a college professor, he started the class on integrated zoology by saying, "Does anybody here believe in God?" I raised my hand. I think I may have been one of two or three people that raised their hands. And he looked at me and the others. And he said, "One of my jobs this year is to prove to you that your belief in God is untenable." And so he announced that one of his goals of the class was to undermine my belief system. That was shocking to me because I always thought his job was to teach me integrated zoology, but no, he wanted to prove to me and the class that my belief system was wrong.

So, I remember going through class after class, professor after professor, challenging my faith. And I went home and I said, "If God doesn't exist, I don't want to believe in him. If this is a fairy tale, I'm not going to be carried along with this. I need to know." So I went and I started reading all sorts of books, but one book that really changed my life was written by somebody that I later became close friends with. In fact, he sat under my ministry for a while in California, and that is Josh McDowell.

Dr. Clinton: Sure.

Skip Heitzig: And his son Sean. And he wrote a book called *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. And I was so blown away by that book that I memorized whole sections of it so that I could present it to my professors, and with great success. So, I was able to lead people along to the thought of God, but also to show them how God exists and how the God of the Bible is real and how they can have a relationship with Him.

Dr. Clinton: What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He? At the end of the day, that's the most important question that you'll ask an answer in your life. Hey, you're listening to Family Talk, a division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, your host. And our special guest is Skip Heitzig. He's pastor of Calvary Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico. We're talking about his new work called *Biography of God*. You've got to get your hands on a copy of this. So, let me go back to then the difference between knowing about God and knowing God, because if he does exist, and God wants a relationship with me, if I'll diligently seek him, then what does that mean to me?

Skip Heitzig: Yeah. There's a great book that is put out by Fyodor Dostoevsky and it's called *The Brothers Karamazov*. One of the actors in the book says, "If there is no God, then everything is permitted." It's a seminal line in the book. "If there is no God, then everything is permitted," and that is true. If there is no God, then you make up the rules as you go along. So, one of the fundamental issues in life really becomes, is there a God or not? Because if there is no God, then everything is permitted. And one of the first things that is permitted is total despair. So I go through and I try to do it in a way that's understandable. I go

through the arguments of how do we know, what evidence is there that there is a God? These are sort of classic philosophical arguments, but I try to make them very practical.

Probably the best argument is to me, the teleological argument, the argument from design. You can go through all the other cosmological arguments, but if you see something like a beautiful car or a watch and you were to say, "Yeah, that car came about by millions of years of evolution. It oozed up out of the parking lot one day, but it took a long time for that to happen." You would say that guy is nuts. This car looks like it has design, therefore, who designed it?

Dr. Clinton: Right.

Skip Heitzig: And what did he have in mind? So, when you look at the human body, there's really no way to say this is an accident. There's a rule called irreducible complexity, and the body is full of things that show irreducible complexity. Here's an example. The eye has irreducible complexity.

If you take one thing away from the eye, one little component away from the eye, it's not going to function. It's like a mouse trap. A mouse trap has just enough things for it to function. If you take away the spring or you take away the little cage or the platform, it's not going to function. The eye shows irreducible complexity. So the question becomes, what did creatures do for millions of years while the eye was being evolved? Well, according to evolutionary theory, it's survival of the fittest, they wouldn't have survived. But they did survive. So how did they survive until the eye was completely formed? So, when you study it like that, the idea of evolutionary theory, and it is a theory, becomes more absurd as you go along. And so just that argument alone, the idea of design is a pretty powerful argument.

Dr. Clinton: You believe that's what the Apostle Paul meant in Romans 1 when he said, "By the createdness of things, man knows there's a God." You can't just look at everything that's around us. Look at our world and just say this all happened by chance or somehow, how did the Big Bang happen and more? It's not even logical.

Skip Heitzig: It's not logical and there's not enough time for it to happen. So, when you deal with randomness, the idea that if given enough time, random events that created or brought the world into existence could have happened, there's just not enough time. There was a study done some years ago at The Wistar Institute in Philadelphia that said how much time would be needed for the universe to come into existence as we know it? And the conclusion after research and by these brilliant people is there hasn't been enough time for that to happen. So, the idea of randomness is untenable.

And one of the reasons I wrote the book about God, *the Biography of God*, is a lot of believers might say, "Well, I don't need to read it. I already know there's a

God. And I have a relationship with God and I can tell people that I believe." But I have discovered that most Christian believers though they're on their way to heaven and all that great stuff and very active in the church, they have reasons that are a little bit too smug when it comes to the unbelieving world, a little too packaged, a little too easy, and they don't necessarily think through the issues.

And so I wanted to be able to equip the church. So, what I do is I kind of go from the book of is there a God? How do we know? What kind of a God is He? And then can we have a relationship? If so, what does that relationship look like? Because think about it, we're always... Evangelicals, we're really good at throwing around the phrase, do you have a personal relationship with God?

Dr. Clinton: Yeah.

Skip Heitzig: But how do you have a personal relationship with a person you never see? How do you have a personal relationship with a person that you never audibly hear, or you can't see body language? So, that sounds a little impersonal. Now, it's possible and the Bible presents that, but how do you do that? So, because God is so unique, the relationship you're going to have with him is also going to be a very unique relationship other than a relationship you'd have with anyone else. And so what does that relationship look like? That really is where I take the book. So, I wrote the book for the skeptic in hopes that I could move this skeptic to become a seeker and hope that I could move the seeker to become a Saint, and have a real rich relationship with God.

Dr. Clinton: Skip, before we conclude this piece, I want to ask you. In your study of God, and we'll talk about the relationship piece in the program for tomorrow, but Skip as you studied God and the attributes of God, what did that start doing to you in your mind about who He is? He's Holy, He's the creator of the world and more, and when you realized that God existed, what's that do inside your soul?

Skip Heitzig: It awakened me to a whole new reason to exist, a reason to get up in the morning, a reason to present myself to this person, to this God, and to work on His behalf. My mind is going in so many different directions, but you touched on something. You mentioned God's holiness. So as I started reading scripture and getting the revelation of God, I understood I'm dealing with a God who is perfect. And I do a whole chapter on this and I call it God's Least Attractive Attribute. God's holiness is his least attractive attribute. And here's why. Imperfection usually doesn't like perfection. If you can sing okay and you stand next to somebody who's an opera voice, that person shows how bad you really are. So, when you are dealing with an imperfect humanity and a perfect Deity, that for most people is a turnoff.

I describe in the book why it shouldn't be a turnoff and why it could actually motivate us. But if you think of social media and social media, we like to portray our ideal self to the world. "This is who I am. This is what I like. Here am I with these important people." But when you understand God's holiness, only then do you understand God's judgment. Some of the other attributes or some of the

other activities of God. The reason God can be loving and wrathful at the same time, and he is, he is both loving and accepting and forgiving, but he will deal with a person in judgment and wrath. You'll only grasp that if you understand his holiness.

Dr. Clinton: Yeah.

Skip Heitzig: You will understand the idea of theological fairness only when you understand his holiness.

Dr. Clinton: As you were talking, Skip, my mind was going through the Psalms, Elohim, God. "He is our refuge and our strength. He's a present help in times of trouble. Therefore, we won't fear.

Skip Heitzig: Amen.

Dr. Clinton: "... Though the earth be removed and the mountains be cast into the depths of the sea, he's in the midst of it. Some trust in chariots and horses, we will trust in the name of the Lord our God."

Skip Heitzig: Love that. Love that. And Tim we're in a pandemic and we're all scratching our heads wondering what is God up to? I have a good friend, he is an Australian. And now he says, "God's up to something. And he's going to work a trick." He says, "He's working a trick." And what he means is I can't understand what's going on around me, but I know God is using this for his purpose and glory, if not to just put the world on pause for a minute and get them, like you said, to really think about eternal things and to get really real and raw about life, because this pandemic has stripped all the other stuff that we rely on our way and we're having to deal with life and death issues every single day.

Dr. Clinton: Well, it's been an inspiring conversation so far with Pastor Skip Heitzig. We're talking about his new book called Biography of God. You don't want to miss part two tomorrow. Skip, thank you for joining us.

Skip Heitzig: Thank you, Tim. God bless you and all your listeners, especially this time of the year.

Roger Marsh: How amazing that God transformed a drug-using teenager like Skip Heitzig into a wise pastor, grounded in scripture. You're listening to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. And today, we were listening to Pastor Skip Heitzig as he wrestled with two questions as a teenager that many Christians wrestle with today. First, does God exist? And second, if he does, is it possible to know him? The profoundly true answer to both questions is an unequivocal: yes! Skip Heitzig has grown closer to an understanding of God's promises by seeking a deeper experience through his ministry and his writings. How you answer those two questions defines how you see the world. And that's the contention of Skip Heitzig in his

brand-new book called *Biography of God*. And make sure you join us again next time to hear the conclusion of that discussion.

By the way, to learn more about Skip's radio ministry and his brand new book, *Biography of God*, visit our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org. And by the way, if you missed any part of today's program, you can hear all of it in its entirety at that same site, drjamesdobson.org/broadcast.

In closing, as you know this month marks the sad anniversary of the Roe versus Wade decision, where the US Supreme Court formally legalized abortion. Here at the James Dobson Family Institute, we are passionately against Roe versus Wade, and we stand firm with you to fight against this assault on pre-born lives. That's why we've created a special audio CD entitled *God's Miracle of Life*. Now, you can order a copy when you visit our special resource page, drjamesdobson.org/miraclecd. We'll send you a copy as our way of thanking you for your tax deductible donation of any amount in support of the James Dobson Family Institute. So again, go to drjamesdobson.org/miraclecd. Together, we can make a difference.

Thanks for listening to Family Talk and be sure to join us again next time for another edition of the program. I'm Roger Marsh.

Announcer:

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