



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: How One Couple Came to Believe in Adoption – Part 1

Guest(s): Robert and Karine Baltodano

Air Date: June 14, 2023

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Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. As we dive into the summer months, most of us will gather with friends and family and you know, some of the best memories are made while enjoying time with loved ones and our kids in the midst of summer fun. I can remember many trips to the beach with my kids when they were younger. Now, they're all in their 30s and they all have graduate degrees.

So the time goes by really quickly. These could be some of the most precious memories and experiences that we'll ever have as parents. Dr. Dobson says, "Children are a gift from God." But not everyone is so fortunate to be blessed to have their own kids naturally. So what is a couple to do if they're having fertility issues and trusting God as a couple through all of that can be quite a challenge?

Well, today on Family Talk, our guests are Robert and Karine Baltodano, a couple that have been through the struggles of not being able to conceive. The Baltodano's journey, led them to open their hearts to adoption. Their story is amazing and you're going to love hearing from them today and tomorrow. So be sure to be with us both days. Now, let me tell you a little bit about them. Robert Baltodano is the general manager of The Bridge Radio, serving listeners in New York, New Jersey, and in Pennsylvania. He's been in Christian radio for over 16 years.

In addition, since 1988, Robert has also served in pastoral ministry as well. He currently serves as the associate pastor of Calvary Chapel Old Bridge in New Jersey. Robert and his wife, Karine, have two kids and they are such a blessing. Karine Baltodano earned a master's degree in marriage and family therapy and in education. She served as a middle school counselor for 10 years. Currently, she's managing the home front while raising her two kids at home.

Recently, the Baltodanos sat down with co-host, Dr. Tim Clinton at the National Religious Broadcasters Convention in Orlando, Florida. Let's join them now for part one of this two-part conversation right here on Family Talk.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Robert, Karine, welcome to Family Talk. What a delight to have you, Dr. Dobson, his wife Shirley, give their regards.

Robert Baltodano: Well, thank you. It's a pleasure to be here.

Dr. Tim Clinton: As we get started, Robert, apart from being the general manager of The Bridge Radio out on the East Coast, you were involved in pastoral ministry for a number of years. Tell us a little bit about that calling on your life.

Robert Baltodano: Absolutely. I went to Bible college, Calvary Chapel Bible College back in the early '90s. I felt a call just to learn the Bible. Before I was a Christian, I was heading towards the film industry. I started doing a lot of internships with a lot of big production companies, film companies. And when I got saved, I figured, "Well, the Lord is going to use me to be in the Christian film industry." But He didn't. He put his arm in my heart to just learn the Bible. And that's what started my journey at Bible college. And from that is where the Lord revealed the calling to be a pastor.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Beautiful. And Karine, master's degree in marriage and family therapy. Education as well. 10 years teaching. Weren't you a middle school counselor?

Karine Baltodano: So my passion goes that way and that when we were married for some time, I wanted to be able to work with children and the door opened with counseling children and in the school environment it just became a win-win.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We're going to talk about your journey together. Yeah. It's a fascinating story, one that we hope will bring a lot of encouragement, especially the couples out there who are on this journey with you. In the midst of it, I want to go back and just talk about how you met, the early days of your relationship and what was happening. Where'd you guys meet? Karine, you tell us the juicy stuff.

Karine Baltodano: High school. We're in two different high schools, but I was 13 and Robert was 16. I was ninth grader and he was an 11th grader. We met through a friend, just purely friendship for a couple years and what happens with best friends, we started to date.

Robert Baltodano: But before that though, when I first met her, it was a friend of mine who was dating her friend, and I believe they broke up and he went out to drop off stuff to her house because they were best friends as his ex-girlfriend. I did not want to go. I said, "No, I don't want to go." He goes, "Come on. I need somebody to go with me." So I said, "All right, fine." So I went with him, went to the house, met her. She thought I was stuck up at first.

Karine Baltodano: You were.

Robert Baltodano: There was no chemistry right away. It was just like, "Okay, I met Karine and whatever." Then afterwards, I think little by little we became friends and we

were talking on the phone and all. So we had a friendship for about, what, two years, three years? That began to evolve into a more... I had more feelings for her. And then that led to us becoming boyfriend and girlfriend. We weren't Christians at this time. We started that journey together and led to her getting saved first.

And then she took me to church. I was raised Roman Catholic, so she would say, go to church with me and say, "No, I don't need to go. I don't believe in God like you." And finally I gave in. I went to church and a few times after going to church, I went down to an invitation to receive Christ.

Karine Baltodano: I was like 17 and he was 20 and he had gotten saved and I had gotten saved just right before. It was pivotal. We know who we are not saved, and we know who we are saved. And the reason we could say we're going to be married for 27 years this week is because we're saved. Totally.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Well, you guys, I can tell have a lot of fun together.

Karine Baltodano: We do.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Love to laugh. In the midst of it, we all know that when you get married, you have dreams, aspirations. And for pretty much everyone, you have this desire to have children. You guys began that journey wanting to get pregnant and start a family. Take us down that road.

Karine Baltodano: Actually, we really remember October 2000 because we really felt like when we had made the decision and we were going to move forward the next month, I'd be pregnant. I really did believe that. And to our shock, we weren't. And then you think, "Okay, might take two, three months." And then the second, third month. I will say that first year, even though we just did this alone and didn't tell anyone we were trying, it was shocking to me.

I was used to A plus B equals C. I didn't understand the miraculous thing it is that someone even gets pregnant. And then you start studying it and at a year into it, that's when we decided to go see a doctor.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Started getting concerned. A lot of people, if you look up online, research things out, talk to doctors. I mean, usually the concern button turns on about where 12 months in? 9 months, 12?

Karine Baltodano: Yeah. They say please don't come until after 12 months. We started researching all that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I know because-

Karine Baltodano: All the things.

Dr. Tim Clinton: ... you're up there constantly looking at everything. You're wondering what's happening?

Robert Baltodano: Yeah. It really was. I mean, coming from a Hispanic family, the expectation to have your own children was high. So that was a pressure on my end when we began to realize that we weren't getting pregnant. So of course you have your mom saying, "Well, what's going on?" And putting pressure on that end. So you have this expectation-

Dr. Tim Clinton: Or people periodically joking around you, "Hey, when you're going to have kids, blah, blah."

Robert Baltodano: Exactly.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And they don't know the journey or the pain that you're going through.

Robert Baltodano: And that was a tough one because during that time I was in upstate New York. We planted a church up there. So I was pastoring already. And during that hard time when people found out that we were having struggles getting pregnant, then people start giving us advice. But the advice was really wonky.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Like you needed to go on cruise.

Robert Baltodano: Cruise.

Karine Baltodano: You need to relax,

Robert Baltodano: Take this and eat that.

Karine Baltodano: Eat licorice. This position and that. And I'm like, "No, no, no."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hey, relax. Take the stress off or whatever.

Karine Baltodano: No.

Dr. Tim Clinton: A billion things coming at you and not realizing that what was happening was just injuring you at a whole nother level because it just compounded everything, right?

Robert Baltodano: It did. I think one of the challenges for me personally as a pastor teaching about faith, teaching about prayer, God provides that we prayed. It's not like we left God out of the equation.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You'd probably pray two, three times a day. Earnestly.

Robert Baltodano: All the time.

Dr. Tim Clinton: For each other.

Robert Baltodano: Believing God would heal my wife, will heal me, whatever was going on. But it wasn't happening. So here I had to wrestle with this myself as I'm before a pulpit, teaching people to have faith in God, put your trust in him. Proverbs 3:5 and 6. But then what about me? I would always envision myself with a little girl then a little boy, but it wasn't happening. So for me, I had to deal with that pain in a different way than my wife, obviously, because for me it was more like, "This is what Hispanics do." They have children, they have a daughter, they have a boy. They go out and play in the park and all.

To me, it was one of those things where I had to just sift through those thoughts because the enemy comes into your mind and throws doubts in your mind that God doesn't care. You guys are not going to have kids. And so it was just wrestling with that. But the biggest thing was to be on the same page as my wife. Because at first I wasn't on the same page when it came to that decision of adoption. I wasn't there yet.

I was still trying to say, "We got to have kids. It's going to happen. God's going to bless us." But it wasn't happening. And that kind of kept me out of sync with her 'cause I think God was already moving in her heart.

Dr. Tim Clinton: What do you think happened in your relationship with God during that time? Because I mean, there's a big word here that we need to say, and that's the issue of loss. There's a sense of loss here of not being able to have children. So what happened? Did it affect your relationship with God initially or what have you?

Robert Baltodano: No, it didn't really, because then my mind starts going towards the Romans 8 adoption that we're adopted. He doesn't see me separate from a Jew, right? There's no Greek, no Jew. Everybody is one. And I'm thinking, "I could do that too. I could look at my adopted son or daughter and look at them as my child because they're adopted like I am adopted before God the Father." So I start kind of going through that theologically.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Isn't that's something how you're processing that, that's a gift in my mind from God.

Robert Baltodano: Absolutely.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Because in counseling, when we talked about this, I remember we put together The Care and Counsel Bible. We looked at the life of Hannah back and talked about infertility, that the pain poured out of her because she was barren and she wailed at it. What was it like for you? Because I don't want to lose this point for those who are listening right now who might be right there. And this doesn't feel right. As a matter of fact, it feels horrible in the moment.

Karine Baltodano: I would like to really share the loss part in dealing with it. I don't know how people do it without Christ, but it does mean when that time of the month comes, you're on the bathroom floor crying and you are hurting, and you are wondering why, or you thought this was the month or something you felt was going to be different. So when those months go by and turn into years, they are heavy and they are hard to pick up yourself every time.

So I know you were dealing with it theologically and God's promises in ways, but emotionally you feel like you're being kicked between the eyes every time.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Robert, and you mentioned that it took a while for the two of you to get on the same page. So no doubt you're on your personal journey. She's on her journey. What began to bring these worlds together, because there's brokenness and there're often hard to give words to, that you want to hold each other, you don't know what to say or you've said a million things and you've run out of what to say. And that's where it gets really difficult. How do we help each other get there, whatever there is.

Robert Baltodano: Yeah. I think the hard part for me is watching her going through her own pain. As a man, it's kind of hard to relate with the emotions of another woman. I mean, it's hard with my wife trying to feel what she's feeling because I'm different the way God wired us. So I did not like to see that when we had conversations and what she would say about her struggles and stuff. I didn't what to say.

And of course, going back to Hannah or Elkanah in that whole process of, "Well, am I better than 10 sons?" It's like, "You got me. Come on, you got me." That was my thought. It's like..."

Karine Baltodano: You totally did.

Robert Baltodano: Hey, we're together. We're having fun, we're traveling. But it wasn't enough for her. So I had to figure that out because as a husband I could easily could have ran her over and said, "Just deal with it. We'll be fine." But I couldn't because it was very fragile and I could have put a big kink in the marriage if I went in that route because I know her. I've known her 30 some years, so I know how she processes certain things. So I had to step back. And then I had to spend my own personal time saying, "God, I need wisdom here. How do I deal with this to know how to deal with her?"

Dr. Tim Clinton: I think a lot of couples will tend to think that they're the only ones who are going through this, that way. And they often feel isolated and alone. I don't want to lose this because I want to normalize it for a moment. This is loss and this is a transition. By the way, God can bring light into that. But getting from that point to that point takes work. And that's what you guys are talking about. And the concern is a lot of couples get into trouble right here and it creates real distance and even potentially a break between the two of them.

Karine Baltodano: Absolutely. And I would say that probably is more the direction sadly because your intimate life is totally becoming an experiment to the medical field. You are doing things medically and checking things into it. You're, the Christian part, you're wondering is this God's way of saying, "You're not supposed to be a parent?" Am I playing God? If I go into even the simplest of interventions.

People really struggle that you have everyone's opinion around you who also want to play into that. You're also watching people who don't have a care in their world, not using any kind protection, getting pregnant left and right. You're wondering why do they get to be parents and we don't? So you're dealing with does God favor them? How is this? And the church is really struggling in stepping forward on this.

Dr. Tim Clinton: To speak into this issue?

Karine Baltodano: Absolutely.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And part of it's because people don't walk around and talk about this.

Karine Baltodano: True.

Dr. Tim Clinton: No one wants to talk about what's not going right. "How are you guys doing? Great?" "No, we're not doing great. This is rough. This is a nightmare for us." And the church, because the church often doesn't have language for it or a plan, they don't know how to speak into it. And so rather than putting together some type of effort, program, anything, the couples are left to, "get help on the outside" from somewhere else. Isn't that true?

Robert Baltodano: It is very true. In fact, when we were in upstate New York, we started a ministry called Hannah's Hope.

Karine Baltodano: Well, actually to step back, Pastor David said, "There's a ministry I want you guys to lead." He goes, "I want you to run an infertility group." I'm like, "Really? Like of everything?" "Anything else, anything."

Robert Baltodano: But it was really good though because we had 25 couples that started because they're in the church. They just don't speak up. What I remember seeing, you had the husband, the wife, the husband was the one that was not on the same page. You could tell because the husband's not on the same page. These guys are having a hard time. And that was the whole point was to try to get the couples on the same page.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Okay. So let's keep going here for a moment. Getting to a place of where, "Okay. We know what we're up against here." And that acceptance piece means, "Okay. Now where do we go from here?" Tell us what was happening for the two of you.

Robert Baltodano: The turning point was in New York when we went to that doctor.

Karine Baltodano: So we took the steps and went and met with the doctor. What they always do first is check the mail because it's a yay or nay, or maybe.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's about sperm count and all that, right?

Karine Baltodano: Yeah. Sperm count, healthy, does have mobility. Of course, Robert was like, "Not me." But he went through the process and checked out fine. Then the woman is so much more complex. So they checked to make sure that you're healthy lining, able to carry. Honestly, nothing came up on me. It came out like there's no answer. And again, goes back to then are we supposed to have kids. If there's no answers. Some people have a medical diagnosis.

Dr. Tim Clinton: So you guys had really unexplained infertility issues.

Robert Baltodano: That's what they told us.

Karine Baltodano: And that's when they said, it's my eggs likely. Only way is through IVF. It'll either be yes or no. And in my own infertility journey, I guess one of the blessings I always found, and I don't mean to be harsh on this, is that I never miscarried. I never even got pregnant. If I ever got pregnant, they would've been more hopeful in my infertility journey, but they really didn't sound like any hope. So it's costly. We had enough money for one try or...

Dr. Tim Clinton: I don't think people understand that too. It is expensive. Here's more added burden now on top of everything. The old insult, the injury type thing. It's just like, "Oh my goodness. God, what's happening?" But what's happening is there's a burning desire down in your soul, and that's not wrong. It's not bad to want to have children.

Robert Baltodano: Nope.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Making sure that we give voice to that for a second. Take us into the next step then. How did you guys navigate these C's?

Robert Baltodano: Now we've, we've been confirmed. We decided together. Here's the important part. It was together. We're not doing this IVF. And then we start talking about adoption. I wasn't 100% behind adoption at that time because in my mind, it crossed my mind to just say, "Well, let's just not have kids. This is the end here." But then Karine starts saying, "Well, what about adoption?"

Karine Baltodano: I waited until he got on board. I was not interested in single parenting at all. I didn't just want a baby, I wanted a family. And so I waited till Robert was on board and it did take years-

Robert Baltodano: It did.

Karine Baltodano: ... before you did. And then when he was on board, we just went to every adoption seminar to check into it, and that way. But the one thing I do appreciate, Robert, that you would always say even when we were struggling that it's not bad to desire that it was normal and natural to desire a family. We weren't desiring something wicked or wrong. We even tell single friends that who have not got married and been waiting, your desire for a spouse is not wrong. It's good. This is what God planned.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And Robert, in a lot of ways, that goes back to your theological training. You were really wrestling with God through this. What did God again put in your heart?

Robert Baltodano: God actually started working that into me. And that's the whole thing about the adoption and being able to see how God sees me as an adopted son. And that began to help me. That whole theological process began again for me. So when we moved back to California, then we started to like my wife said, Karine, that we start looking into adoption seminars and we were going to these places, meeting with agencies. And basically, Ted Youmans, who was the attorney who was God used tremendously in California. He's still doing this adoption ministry that he has, and he's a lawyer. He's the one that... I don't know how we found out. At his house, he had this support for people that wanted to adopt.

We were in this circle, about 10 people. He didn't know us from Adam. He looked at us and he says, "You know what? I'm going to pray for you guys. God, just lay this on my heart. Let me pray for you guys." I looked down, I'm like, "No, you don't even know who we are." He doesn't know our story.

Karine Baltodano: And it's also the first time anyone really prayed over us for infertility.

Robert Baltodano: So he started praying over us and the Lord began to open those doors with him for adoption.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Well, we're up against time here just for a moment, but this is a fascinating story because I want to make sure our listeners know you don't want to miss tomorrow's broadcast because what God has done in this home, in this marriage is beyond spectacular. And they're going to take you down a road of a unique journey that God brought into their life and how God's brought two children in a special way that you won't want to miss.

Let's button up today's broadcast by just speaking to that couple who are out there right now and maybe their loved one is listening who know of a couple. What would be your word of hope and encouragement as we wrap up today's program?

Karine Baltodano: If I could give encouragement to family and friends who know someone who's struggling, love on them. Don't offer advice without being asked for it and pray for them. Just pray over them, but try to, like you were saying, normalize it and

giving them opportunities to speak about perhaps the sadness of loss or how hard Mother's Day might be. Just giving them opportunities to be real and open.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah.

Robert Baltodano: And for me, don't give up because the desire that you have is a good thing and God created us to procreate, and that's a good thing. If the desire is in you, there's ways that we can talk about in the next program on how we did this and how God provided for the funds in what we did. So I say, don't lose hope. God has a plan for you.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah. God sees you. He understands. He hears the cry of your heart. He's with you and He will see you through. He will do that. Our special guests today have been Robert and Karine Baltodano. A special guest with a story that's unbelievable related to infertility and having children. This is quite a cliffhanger really. Tomorrow, you're going to tell us exactly what happened as you guys began this journey toward adoption. I know it was pretty turbulent challenging, but what a fascinating story it is. I can't wait for you to come back.

Roger Marsh: I hope you found the Baltodano's story to be fascinating, emotional, and ultimately inspiring. These two precious parents are servants for the kingdom here on earth. Now, what you heard was only part one of the conversation with Robert and Karine Baltodano and our co-host, Dr. Tim Clinton. Please be sure to join us again tomorrow for part two and the conclusion of this conversation here on Family Talk. And if you have a chance, go to our broadcast page and you'll see a photo of this very cute couple.

Now, if you are dealing with your own personal challenges regarding infertility and are seeking guidance and resources, a good place to start your journey is the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute customer care team. Just call 877-732-6825. Our trained staff will be happy to provide you with helpful information and even pray with and for you if that's what you need. Don't hesitate to reach out. Again, our ministry number is 877-732-6825.

Now friends, if you receive value from the program here at the JDFI, why not consider partnering with us to help strengthen other families as well? One great way to do so is with a financial donation to our ministry. And throughout the month of June, we have been blessed by some special friends of our ministry with a matching grant of \$300,000. That's right. Each dollar we receive this month will be matched up to our \$300,000 goal. So if you're able to provide us with a financial contribution today, please know it will be immediately doubled for twice the impact.

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Call 877-732-6825. Our customer care team is standing by to speak with you and to receive your gift. Again, that's 877-732-6825 to make a donation by phone.

I'm Roger Marsh and on behalf of Dr. Dobson and the entire team here at Family Talk, thanks so much for listening, thanks so much for your prayers and your financial support as well. May God continue to richly bless you and your family as you grow closer in your relationship with him. Be sure to join us again tomorrow for the powerful conclusion of how one couple came to believe in adoption. That's coming your way next time on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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