



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Do Jews Need Jesus

Guest(s): Dr. Lon Solomon & David Brickner

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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: Do Jews need Jesus? That's a question that may generate different answers from different members of the body of Christ, but it's an important one to consider, nonetheless. Today on Family Talk, we're going to revisit one of our classic programs, which addresses this issue so well.

Now joining Dr. Dobson in studio today is Dr. Lon Solomon, who served for nearly 40 years as senior pastor of McLean Bible Church near our nation's capitol. He is the founder of Lon Solomon Ministries and broadcasts the message of the gospel through hundreds of broadcast facilities each week.

He holds master's degrees in Hebrew, Old Testament and Near Eastern Studies, and earned his doctorate in Divinity from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary. Since 1987, Dr. Solomon has also served on the board of directors for Jews for Jesus, and currently serves as the chairman of their executive board.

Joining Dr. Dobson and Dr. Solomon is David Brickner, executive director of Jews for Jesus. He holds a master's degree in Missiology with an emphasis on Jewish evangelism and Judaic studies from the Fuller School of World Mission. Let's listen in now to this classic edition of Family Talk.

Dr. Dobson: With us is our great friend, Lon Solomon. He's been here a number of times here in the studio, and he's back with us today. Lon is a senior pastor at McLean Bible Church in McLean, Virginia. He is the host of a 30 minute Sunday radio broadcast called "So What?" Great title.

He also serves as a member of the board of the international ministry Jews for Jesus, which is the linkage to today's broadcast. And that leads us to our second guest, David Brickner. David has served with Jews for Jesus in a number of different positions and has been the executive director since 1996.

David is an album producer, as well as a published author. He's a fifth generation Jewish believer in Jesus. Welcome to you both.

David Brickner: Thank you.

Dr. Lon Solomon: Thank you.

David Brickner: Shalom.

Dr. Dobson: Shalom. Lon, you grew up in a Jewish home, didn't you?

Dr. Lon Solomon: Yes, I did.

Dr. Dobson: And David, I think you did the same thing?

David Brickner: Yes, I did.

Dr. Dobson: So you would both call yourself Jews?

David Brickner: Absolutely.

Dr. Lon Solomon: Yes.

Dr. Dobson: Jewish believers, right?

David Brickner: Absolutely.

Dr. Lon Solomon: Absolutely.

Dr. Dobson: And most of the people listening to us probably don't know exactly what that means. Lon, what was life like growing up in a Jewish home? How different was it from, what you call, Gentiles, experienced in their youth?

Dr. Lon Solomon: Well, my home, I grew up in a conservative Jewish family and I went to Hebrew school, went to Sunday school at the synagogue, was bar mitzvah'd. My mom lit Sabbath candles. I mean, it was a traditional Jewish home.

And the first time that I really even recognized there was a difference was when a friend at school one day asked me if I, as a Jewish person, was going to heaven or hell? And I didn't even know what she was talking about.

And I went and asked my Rabbi, "Do Jewish people go to heaven or hell?" And he basically said, "We have an arrangement with God that's different than Gentiles, and so that's really kind of a Gentile problem." And so I never worried about it again till I got in college and my life-

Dr. Dobson: What was implying by that, that you did or did not go to heaven?

Dr. Lon Solomon: No, that we did not need Jesus, and it wasn't even an issue that we should even be discussing. So I didn't. And then when I got into college and my life fell apart, got into drugs and all kinds of other things. I met a street preacher who started telling me about Jesus, and of course that led to my reading the New Testament and giving my life to Christ 35 years ago.

Dr. Dobson: And then into the ministry and the Lord has just used you in a dramatic way.

Dr. Lon Solomon: It's been a great 35 years.

Dr. Dobson: What did your family say? How did they react when you made this move?

Dr. Lon Solomon: They weren't real excited. I think my parents would have preferred me to stay on drugs rather than believe in Jesus, but my mom and dad both ended up coming to Christ before they died. My only sibling, a brother, is an active follower of Christ today.

Dr. Dobson: David, tell us about your background?

David Brickner: Well, my story is quite different. I come from the oldest lineage of Jewish believers in Jesus that we know of. My great- great-grandfather was the chief Rabbi of an ultra-Orthodox sect of Judaism back in the Ukraine. And in the 1800s, his wife became a believer in Jesus.

You think Lon and I raise eyebrows today, you can imagine what it was like for the wife of a Orthodox Rabbi to come to faith in Christ. And she had the privilege of leading all of her children. And so on my mother's side, five generations of Jewish believers in Jesus.

Dr. Dobson: So, you were not raised with a Jewish tradition?

David Brickner: Well, I was. My father came from an Orthodox Jewish home out of Mobile, Alabama. Southern fried chicken variety of Orthodox Jew. But my parents raised me in a Jewish home. We celebrated the Jewish holidays, I had a bar mitzvah, but I was also taught that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah and that the most Jewish thing that any Jew could do would be to believe and follow Him. So my heritage is unusual, but is beautiful to me.

Dr. Dobson: Is it true that many Christians feel that Jews have that special relationship with God that your rabbi told you about, Lon, that you are the chosen people and therefore it isn't really wise and certainly not necessary to share our faith in Jesus Christ with people of the Jewish faith?

Dr. Lon Solomon: Well, I think part of this is understanding what the Jewish people were chosen for. They are the chosen people, but Paul's very clear in Romans chapter nine, what the Jewish people were chosen for. Three things. They were chosen, number one, to give the scriptures to the world. Number two, to give the true

knowledge of God to the world. And number three, to be the human conduit to give the Messiah to the world. The important point is that nowhere in the Bible does it say they were chosen for automatic salvation or automatic eternal life.

As a matter of fact, Paul says the exact opposite. Acts chapter 20, "I have declared to both Jews and Gentiles alike that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord, Jesus Christ." So from Paul's point of view, the Jewish people were certainly not chosen for eternal life. They had to come to Christ like everybody else did.

Dr. Dobson: Why would he have made his missionary journeys and put such effort into starting the church, essentially, to Jews, if it wasn't necessary to evangelize Jews?

David Brickner: That's right. We have to remember that Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. And no one comes to the Father, but by me."

Dr. Dobson: Let's take that again real slowly, because this is important, David.

David Brickner: Yeah.

Dr. Dobson: Let's say it again.

David Brickner: Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. And no one comes to the Father, but by me." And most Christians don't stop and realize that when Jesus spoke those words on earth, he was speaking to a Jewish audience. And if it didn't apply to the people he was talking to, how could it apply to anyone else?

Dr. Lon Solomon: Well, don't forget Nicodemus was a Jewish rabbi. Jesus said to him, "You must be born again to see the kingdom of God." And of course Paul, remember, every city he went to on his missionary journeys, the very first place he went was to the synagogue or where the Jewish people were meeting.

He said, Romans 1:16, "The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. To the Jew first, also to the Gentile." So this idea that Jewish people somehow don't need Jesus is not at all a biblical concept, but there is a reason why this is being taught today, if I could continue just a moment.

Dr. Dobson: Sure.

Dr. Lon Solomon: If you get a Jewish person engaged in an honest and serious study of the scripture, they will come up with the messiahship of Jesus, because you can't come up with anything else.

Dr. Dobson: That's right.

Dr. Lon Solomon: So, Jewish leaders, understanding that at that level they lose the battle, what they have done is tried to push the perimeter farther out. So that exactly what my rabbi said to me, "Don't talk to these people. Don't engage with these people. We're fine."

And the idea here is to keep us as followers of Christ from even engaging Jewish people in a discussion like this, that's where they can win the battle. So there's been a very clever public relations job that the Jewish leaders have pulled off in the last 20 years to try to convince us as evangelical Christians that they're fine, that it's disrespectful to share Christ with them, that we're hurting our dialogue, we're hurting our progress together.

I'm not sure progress to what, but whatever it is. And so a lot of the evangelical churches bought into this, and that's why we're glad to be here because the slippage is frightening.

David Brickner: We can recognize this public relations ploy when it comes to redefining other social issues. For example, homosexual lifestyle has been redefined as an alternate lifestyle. Abortion has been redefined as a woman's right to choose, but when it comes to the issue of the gospel, we want to play fast and loose with that and we can't, because the Bible doesn't give us that opportunity. And yet that's exactly the public relations ploy that is going on right now.

Dr. Dobson: If political correctness is the barrier today, we're afraid to offend somebody, in the past there has been outright hostility to Jews hasn't there? I mean, many people in the Christian faith were responsible for a lot of pain from the other side. Did you experience that, Lon, as a child? Did anyone ever throw rocks at you or make fun of you?

Dr. Lon Solomon: Honestly, I didn't experience any of that growing up.

Dr. Dobson: I've had Jews tell me that that became a tremendous barrier to Christianity, because they didn't like what they saw.

David Brickner: That's true. Antisemitism has reared its ugly head at numerous times. And so for Jewish people, there's not an understanding of the difference between those who claim to be Christians and those who really are. For many Jewish people, Willie Mays, Billy Graham, Adolf Hitler, and the Pope, all fall into the same category. They're all Christians.

And therefore some of the worst things that have been done to the Jewish people over the past 2,000 years are identified with the name of Jesus. And of course, this is just a lie from the pit of hell. And in the problem with public relations, this has been utilized as a pressure point against Christian leaders. Jewish leaders will say, "Hey, Jewish people have suffered so much, just leave us alone."

And of course it sounds good. It sounds tolerant. But the problem is, the greatest gift of love that God gave to my Jewish people is the Messiah, Jesus. And to withhold that great gift is not a loving thing. It is perhaps one of the worst forms of antisemitism in the end, because it condemns my people to a Christless eternity, which is far worse than any program or Holocaust that Hitler could ever devise.

Dr. Dobson: Are you all convinced that many evangelical churches have taken the position that they have no responsibility to introduce Jews to Christ?

David Brickner: Dr. Dobson, there are Christian leaders who are proclaiming that as fact, but the greatest support that can be shown for Israel and for the Jewish people is the support that God offers in the Messiah. And so, to withhold the message of Christ from my Jewish people breaks my heart. It broke Paul's heart.

He said, "I have unceasing anguish and could wish that I myself were accursed for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh." And so when those of us, like Lon and myself, Jewish people who believe in Jesus, who've come to know him as our Messiah. When we see our brothers and sisters in Christ backing off from a willingness to share this greatest story with our own people, it breaks our heart.

Dr. Dobson: Lon, tell us a little more about that street person that told you about Christ?

Dr. Lon Solomon: Well, you know what's interesting, his name was Bob Eckhardt and he still is living in South Carolina right now. And he came to town once a week, Saturday afternoon, this was in Chapel Hill. I was a student at University of North Carolina. And would stand out on this street and give out tracks and was not very well received, as you might imagine, in a college town.

And to make a long story short, he and I struck up a little bit of a friendship, because I really sensed this guy had what I was looking for. By then I was really searching, but I had covered everything I could think of. I'd covered Eastern religions, drugs, higher education, partying, fraternity life.

I'd even gone back to meet with the campus Rabbi to see if maybe I'd missed something in Judaism. And I couldn't find answers to my questions anywhere. And this guy, you could just, I don't know, it was the Holy Spirit. You could look in his eyes and I knew he had what I was looking for.

Dr. Dobson: There you were, a student, and who would have believed that a street guy would be able to get through to you?

Dr. Lon Solomon: Well, I was a drug addict. I pushed drugs, sold drugs, used a lot of drugs. And yet there was something about him that my spirit just said, "This guy's got what you're looking for." He got me into reading the New Testament, challenged me to do it.

And when I did, I came to Christ, and he was as Gentile as a ham and cheese sandwich. And you know, the interesting thing is you talk to most Jewish people who have come to believe in the Messiah, it was a Gentile friend that was responsible, not a Jewish friend.

And that's why we are so passionate about trying to get the listeners out there who are not Jewish, to love and reach out to and pray for and interact with their Jewish friends. Because most Jewish people don't come to Christ because some Jewish person reached out to them, but because some Gentile friend did.

Dr. Dobson: David, what is Jews for Jesus trying to do specifically, and how do you go about it?

David Brickner: Well, our mission statement is we exist to make the messiahship of Jesus an unavoidable issue to our Jewish people worldwide. And so we have missionaries and branches all around the world, wherever there are large concentrations of Jewish people, and we're there preaching the gospel.

We're out on the street corners, on the college campuses. We have personal visitation, one to one visits with Jewish people where we open the scriptures and share our personal testimonies. And we are seeing Jewish people come to believe in Jesus now in ways that we haven't seen since perhaps the first century, when those first Jews for Jesus, Peter, James and John were out preaching the gospel.

But 65% of the staff members of Jews for Jesus have come to faith in Christ through the witness of a Gentile Christian. So, a lot of our ministry is also focused on sharing with our brothers and sisters in Christ how they can effectively witness to their Jewish friends.

Dr. Dobson: Do you take a lot of flak from people that say, "Why are you doing this? You're insulting us. We know who we are. We've got a tradition. It's okay if you want to be a Christian, don't try to make me one?"

David Brickner: Well, sure. And obviously the message of the gospel has been creating controversy, especially in the Jewish community, since Jesus walked the earth. In John chapter nine we find that after he healed the blind man, that the Jewish leadership decided that anyone seen following Jesus would be put out of the synagogue.

And 2,000 years hasn't changed that very much. But the fact of the matter is that the message of the gospel is a message of love. It's one of compassion and reaching out, and we don't force anybody. We don't collar them. We engage in a conversation, in an interaction, and we want people to read the Bible and to discover for themselves who Jesus really is.

Dr. Dobson: What a shame that someone so Jewish, Jesus, has become to represent a Gentile faith. I mean the most Jewish thing you can do is accept this Jewish Jesus, right?

David Brickner: That's right.

Dr. Dobson: It's how we see it.

David Brickner: Absolutely. And so when Christians understand exactly what you just said, Dr. Dobson, they get excited and they want to share that message with their Jewish friends. And so Jews for Jesus stands by ready to help. And we have a witnessing kit that we send out to Christians to let them know about how they can witness to Jewish people. And we also encourage Christians to send us the names and addresses of their Jewish friends, and we'll go and witness to them as well. We'll send them literature and we'll meet with them and discuss the gospel with them as well.

Dr. Dobson: I tell you, I have a very, very warm place in my heart for Jews. I've felt that way all my life. I guess it's part of the evangelical training that I had at home. I've mentioned it before, but it bears repeating that on May the 15th, 1948, when Israel became a nation again and the Jewish people began to return to Israel, my mother took me into bedroom that morning before school and sat me down on the bed and sat down beside me and got the newspaper and told me what had happened.

And that they had been watching for this prophetic event all our lives as a family and going back thousands of years, and it had happened that day. And I get choked up when I think about that.

Dr. Lon Solomon: We live in very exciting times when it comes to Jewish evangelism. Like David said, there's probably more Jewish believers alive today than at any time since the days of the apostles. David, what do you figure, how many Jewish believers worldwide?

David Brickner: Well, it's hard to know, but the low estimate is 35,000 and the high estimate is 250,000. Now that's still a drop in the bucket.

Dr. Dobson: How many Jews are there in the world now?

David Brickner: About 13.8 million, half of them, almost, live here in the United States. And what Lon was saying is absolutely true. There are approximately as many Jewish people living in Israel as in the United States. Up until recently, the U.S. had the largest concentration of Jews in the world.

And so when you look at a passage like Zachariah that says, "In the last days, I will make Jerusalem a boiling pot of the nations and a heavy stone that no one can lift." And then we see that it's Jerusalem that's at the center of the

controversy right now. We have to look and see that God's word is coming to pass.

Dr. Dobson: Lon, this program today came out of a telephone conversation that you and I had of great concern of something that was on your heart, that you shared with me. And I asked you to come here and from that came this entire broadcast, but it had another component to it. It was not only about sharing our faith with our Jewish friends, but it was about the trend in evangelicalism away from Christ himself and toward what might be called Christology. Explain that.

Dr. Lon Solomon: Well, if you remember when we spoke, we were talking about how the slippage in the need for Christ, not just for Jewish people, but for everybody, the slippage in John 14:6 was beginning to creep in, in a very frightening way to the evangelical world.

It doesn't surprise us that it exists in the liberal church, but in the evangelical church. And as you and I spoke, and we agreed that once we open that door and we say any group of people don't need Christ, no matter who they are, we've gone over the edge and down the slope till eventually when nobody needs Christ.

And so this really lies at the heart of the very integrity of evangelical Christianity, is everybody needs Christ. That's the message of the Bible, and it has never changed. But there are many Christian leaders who have bought into the rhetoric that they don't need Christ, that they have some other arrangement.

And so what we wanted you to do, and you've been so gracious to do it, is allow us to leapfrog over some of these seminaries and some of these leaders and go right to the heart of the average American believer in Christ, or around the world, because that's what George Whitefield did in the great awakening.

The churches had all gone liberal. You remember he said, "The reason there are dead men sitting in the pews, is because they have dead men preaching to them." And so he leapfrogged the pastors and went right to the people in the open air.

Dr. Dobson: I'd like to say something to our listeners right now, those who are committed to Christ, they call themselves Christians, they are Christians, and speak, not about them, but to them. Let me say to those of you who are listening, do you find it easier in public to talk about God than Jesus?

Do you find it really hard to say the name of Jesus in public for fear you will offend people? God is kind of politically correct. Jesus is politically incorrect. Are you denying the name of Christ even perhaps in your churches, or in your places of work?

When you sit down to write, do you find it easier to talk about, "I'm a follower of God," than, "I'm a follower of Jesus Christ?" I'm observing this. It's okay to acknowledge that there's a God, but you can't acknowledge Christ. There's something about that name that's so offensive to people.

And we, as Christians, must not get sucked into that dichotomy where we're afraid to mention the one who died for us on the cross and through whose blood we now have eternal life.

Dr. Lon Solomon: And that really lies at the heart, what you said, Dr. Dobson, of this issue. If you try to build a dialogue with Jewish leaders on the basis of God, you can do that. But you try to build it on the name of Jesus and the fat hits the fan. So you're so right, that it is the proclamation of Jesus Christ the Messiah, who paid for our sins on the cross with his blood.

What did Paul say in Galatians? "There is the offense of the cross." No matter how hard we try not to be offensive, there is the offense of the cross, and if we try to take the offense of the cross out for Jewish people, Muslim, it doesn't matter, for anybody, we don't have the gospel anymore.

Dr. Dobson: Well, gentlemen, thank you for your love for Jesus Christ. David, thank you for Jews for Jesus and all that to you all are trying to do. Our prayers are with you. And I just pray that the Lord will continue to bless in your effort. And Lon, thank you for calling me and expressing this concern. That's why I wanted you all to be here, and I do hope that it's resonated in the hearts of the people who are listening to us, because there is a need to evangelize all of God's people and to do so with the name of Jesus Christ. Gentlemen, thanks for being with us.

Dr. Lon Solomon: Thank you doctor.

David Brickner: Thank you.

Dr. Dobson: And we'd love to have you come back.

David Brickner: Thank you.

Roger Marsh: An encouraging reminder about the importance of the cross and evangelizing the Jewish community, as we conclude this informative conversation today on Family Talk. Dr. Dobson's guests have been Dr. Lon Solomon and David Brickner, discussing the work they're doing with the ministry, Jews for Jesus.

Now when you visit today's broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org, you'll find links for both Jews for Jesus, as well as Lon Solomon Ministries, with information on how you can support each of these outstanding organizations. Again, you'll find those links when you go to D-R-jamesdobson.O-R-G, and then tap on the broadcast tab at the top of the page.

Well, now that both of the major political parties have held their conventions and settled on their presidential candidates, the battle lines for decision 2020 have been clearly drawn. Dr. Dobson believes that there are several essentials every Christian needs to understand, and then take that wisdom to the polls as we take a stand for biblical values in our culture in this year's election.

He's writing about the most urgent issues in his publication called Faith Votes, and you can get a free copy when you go to drjamesdobson.org/faithvotes. That's drjamesdobson.org/faithvotes. Well, that's all the time we have for today. Be sure to join us again next time when you'll hear the first installment of Dr. Dobson's powerful new discussion with Pat Robertson, you won't want to miss it.

So tune in again for an all new edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks for listening.

Announcer:

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