



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Pure Flix: Quality Christian Entertainment with Bold Vision

Guest(s): Michael Scott and Bill Abbott

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

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hello everyone and welcome into Family Talk. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host of the broadcast here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Honored to serve alongside Dr. Dobson as resident authority on mental health and relationships here at the JDFI. Thank you for joining us today. Our guest is an expert in communicating God's message in an engaging and entertaining way. I'm talking about movies. Who doesn't like a good movie? His name is Michael Scott. He's the co-founder and outgoing CEO of Pure Flix, a faith and family-based subscription video on-demand service. He's produced more than 40 movies worldwide. Michael has helped Pure Flix become the largest faith and family movie production and distributor in the world. In 2005, Michael founded Pinnacle Peak Pictures, which has produced a few box office hits that you might've seen called God's Not Dead. Do You Believe? What If? The Case For Christ.

He's also produced a successful TV series called Travel the Road based on his brother's extensive international ministry work. Michael has earned degrees in theology and applied science. He and his wife have a son. And also joining us is Bill Abbott, he's the president and CEO of Pure Flix and of Great American Media. As the company's flagship network. Great American Family features original holiday movies, romcoms and classic series celebrating faith, family and country. Michael, Bill, what a delight to have you both join us here on Family Talk. Dr. Dobson and his wife Shirley, send their regards.

Michael Scott: Thank you so much. I appreciate it. It's a pleasure.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah, Michael, what a delight to have you. And Bill, what a delight to have you too.

Bill Abbott: Thank you very much. It's great to be here.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hey, as we get started, Michael, I saw you at the NRB and Bill, I'm assuming you were there too recently. And you guys rolled out a whole new slate of content on your Pure Flix multi-tiered platform. Tell us a little bit about what's happening, how exciting it is.

Michael Scott: Well, I think there's a lot going on right now, it's exciting times. We just released a new piece of content called God's Country Song. It's an original we did. I think it's combining that country music with the story of hope and redemption, I think it's incredible to see. I think people are really responding to it as we released it. It's really good. And we have a slate of new things to come from Divine Influencer to new series like Revelation Road to Eleanor's Bench, all these different things are coming and I'm excited. And at this very moment we're also going through a transition in the organization and Bill Abbott's going to be taking over and it's a wonderful time that's going to continue growth into the future.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Bill, you guys are the number one distributor, faith and family movies, content and yes, I think things are changing for the better. How exciting. Let's do a little backwater story if we can on both of you, Michael, let's learn a little bit about you and how you got involved. I know that you've got some education in religion and what's your background and what brought you to this industry?

Michael Scott: Well, it goes way back. It starts at the beginning. My parents were pastors, so I always say I grew up literally sleeping under the pew, on the pew, over the pew. I was in church seven days a week. So I had this strong faith background and I had this desire for film, photography and the arts and I wasn't sure how those would come together. And I went to school for advertising, spent a long time in advertising, saw the power of what media could do. You could take a 30-second commercial and if you told a great story, you could sell a taco, a car, a computer.

But I said it would be very interesting how we could do that with the faith side of things. Movies and television are such powerful stories. So in 2005, I left that side of the business and started Pure Flix and it's been an incredible journey to make over 50 films for this marketplace, distribute a bunch more and now have a streaming platform that's streaming in over a million people's homes all the time is an incredible thing and I think we've seen what's happened and how it's touched people's lives.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Well, it's breathtaking really. And Bill a little bit about you too?

Bill Abbott: About me. So I was very blessed in that when I graduated college I went into research and soon after got hired by CBN, which became The Family Channel, it was originally a Christian Broadcasting Network. And I was running research for that business and learned the ins and outs through Tim Robertson, who was still the best CEO I ever worked for. I did that for quite a while and then moved on to Hallmark where I was there for 20 years. I have four children myself, 25 through 21, so a lot still on our plate, but also-

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's a special time of life right there. I love those years.

Bill Abbott: Yes, it is.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Well, again, a delight to have both of you. I wanted to take a moment to read your mission statement for Pure Flix and then I want to talk about that. "Pure Flix is a worldwide leader in selecting and streaming faith and family-friendly media that changes lives, inspires hearts and lifts the spirits of members like you and those you love. Our mission, to select media that strengthens your faith and values is wholesome and suitable for the entire family and streamed seamlessly on any device." And then you write, "Let's inspire together as a transformational voice in our culture. As a Pure Flix member, you can have faith that your entertainment is free from uncomfortable surprises." Boy, do we get a lot of that. "For both you, your family and your community." I wanted you guys to react to that statement. Have you guys been able to hold true to that? I mean, when you think of Hollywood and everything that goes on in the film industry and more, people are all over the map.

Michael Scott: There's so much of the other type of media being created that's dark. I always say that we have a chance to be a light in the darkness. And I think our media can touch people in ways that it can't in Hollywood. We're actually ultimately telling stories from the heart, things that are going to inspire you. We're exploring themes of forgiveness, hope, redemption, all those things that we read about in the Bible and different things like that.

And I always say that Jesus told stories and parables and today the modern day parables is movies and television. And what a powerful tool! That you can visually watch something and hear it and be inspired by a story that will take you to places you've never saw. And then really see how God might work or values that might uplift your family versus pulling them away. I think so often content pulls people away from what they believe, whether it be their faith, their values

and all these things. They're opposite of it. And the more you feed yourself that type of content, I think the more impact it has on your life, not in a positive way and we want to have a positive impact.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah, Michael, I agree with you on that. When I think of influence, I pick up my phone, everybody has a digital device and the influence that comes through this thing is unbelievable and it's more than significant. It's profound for good and bad.

Bill Abbott: Exactly right. Divine Influencer is a great example of how social media does play such a role and it can be used for better or worse. It's content like that that I would point to that's so important for the culture and so important for the conversation that happens between families and people and individuals and that there's an increase in awareness of how polluted the culture has become on the other side that does drive you away from your family and away from the best interests of your own soul really.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You know, through the years I've had opportunities to interview, have conversations with Mel Gibson, Randall Wallace, Michael Landon Jr and a few others, and I've often heard them say, "If we don't take back the media and the arts, we're not going to win." And you guys again have stepped in that direction. When I think about the work you're doing, everybody thinks about Hollywood and what Hollywood isn't doing right. Talk to us about why it's important to create Christian content. Why that statement about winning the battle for the media and arts become so significant?

Michael Scott: This research says we spend 10, 12 hours a day connected to some form of media or device or whatever as the average. So what you put in is what comes out. And so ultimately we've got to ask ourselves, I think it's not just for our kids, I think it's for us adults, what are we putting in? Because ultimately that's going to change you and that's what's going to come out. And so I hope that we're putting in the right things. That's why we need more of this that's going to strengthen our family, strengthen our faith so that those things come out and are propagated throughout our culture, which I think will strengthen our culture.

Bill Abbott: Exactly right. And role models are so important and having the right framework, another opportunity out there to present a different side.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah, when you think of media, every day it keeps amping up to another level and the demand, I guess, on you to produce content that connects with today's generation has got to be the constant challenge. A lot of people think if it's Christian, it's second rate, it's cheesy, it's low budget, that type of thing. And you

guys have set, I think, a pace that really is defying that. And by the way, it's showing up when people show up at the box office and more, they are or they're online streaming, you're seeing it happen. But let me ask both of you about what do you look for when you go to think about creating a movie? We're going to talk about some of the works you guys have done, but theme lines, et cetera. I remember asking Randall Wallace, "What do you look for?" And we were talking about Braveheart. He just said, "It's the cry of the soul." What are people looking for? What do you guys do? How do you go about doing that?

Michael Scott: I think for me, in creating a lot of content over the years, I look for things that are ultimately going to draw you closer to God not further away.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I love that.

Michael Scott: So often I hear from creators and different things, even that may be on the Christian side, how close can we get to the edge? Well, maybe instead of getting to the edge, let's go to the other way and run towards something that's really inspiring, that has themes of redemption, hope, inspiration, all of those types of things. So I think there's so many stories to be told that can be impactful. I think they can be told in a positive way that strengthen what we believe in, family values and all those things. So our hope is that we're not tearing it down, we're strengthening those things.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Bill, your take?

Bill Abbott: We want to provide people that oasis in the desert that they can go to and they know they'll be uplifted, it'll be positive, it will ultimately have those elements of redemption that are so critical for humanity.

Michael Scott: And not every piece of content too has to preach at you. It can just reinforce great values too. I think Disney, if you go back way in the day, they did a lot of that. Years and years ago, maybe decades ago. But I think it's really how can we reinforce great values as well.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host. Our special guest today, Michael Scott, former, I guess you would say, CEO of Pure Flix. And Bill Abbott who is the current CEO of Pure Flix. And what a delight to have both of you here, God's doing an amazing work in and through you. I wanted to jump straight into some of what you've done. Maybe people really connect here. You guys launched a movie in 2014, God's Not Dead, made \$64 million. It's unbelievable. You don't ignore that. Everyone in Hollywood's like,

"Uh-oh, what's happened here?" What does it say about the hunger for God, Michael? I bet you were just shocked or maybe you weren't.

Michael Scott: I was. You never know how a movie's going to do until opening day and so you're literally praying, "I hope this works." If we all knew, I heard a saying once, someone came in and looked at the business and said, "Well, I don't understand, why don't you guys just make hits? Why would you make the other stuff?" Well, it's a little more challenging than that. But you never know what a certain movie's going to do. I think it was the right movie at the right time that ultimately spoke to the audience and what they were experiencing and feeling at that time.

And I think when you get a movie that connects like that and it does incredible things and I think we've seen other movies do that as well and that movie spun out into, we're getting ready to do the fifth one, so it's spun out in two five now that go through different aspects, is God really alive or dead and where does God really belong in our society? I think is an interesting question to explore. And so that movie did kick things off and allowed us to do a lot of things like the streaming platform that's taking place now and more theatrical movies and all these things. So I'm always thankful for what that movie provided and how we're able to pour those resources back into furthering the kingdom.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You know, when I think about modern day culture, I reflect on how I think the family, I mean Dr. Dobson has said this forever. "The family's getting killed." Especially today, when you look at the gender confusion stuff out there, the pornographic epidemic, the fatherless family, so much more. Do these kinds of issues also affect the topics that you guys look at?

Michael Scott: For us in Pure Flix, you know we want to find things that ultimately reinforce God's love and what God's about. I think our society is so divisive right now and there's so many rabbit trails you can go down. I think it's time where people need a break to be able to say, "I need something that's going to uplift my spirit."

Bill Abbott: And really reinforce it and not make church a place that is made fun of or in so much content it becomes a poke fun at or a mockery or driving people apart from their faith. And that's the last thing the culture needs right now.

Dr. Tim Clinton: No doubt you guys have had an uphill battle in Hollywood, getting actors. What

I'm encouraged by is you guys have attracted some really well-known actors in your movies. Talk to us about what that says. I mean, do you see a trend hopefully in a positive direction out there?

Bill Abbott: I think for sure. I think that actors are tired of not producing content or being in content that their children can watch or that their families can watch or even their parents or grandparents can watch. And there's a real pull toward being in content that incorporates elements of faith, how they grew up maybe, along with family. So I think the tide is definitely in our favor and the creative community on the talent side really wants to be supporting what we do.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Michael, what are some of the challenges, I guess, maybe of going from concept to a final product that these are the hurdles to get through? I think a lot of people are interested in your work and where you think those big challenges are. Does it come back to the theme and ultimately the move of God and more in this or what?

Michael Scott: It does. It comes back to the theme. Sometimes we're just telling great stories, but also sometimes we're telling stories that have a message and how do you balance the message and the story so it feels organic? And when you can bring those two together, you can have success or otherwise it can feel a bit like propaganda. And so the balance of those two is really, really key. It's a tricky thing. So when you go into a story and you're driving maybe a particular message that you would like to get through, it's always trying to balance out those two.

So, I mean, the foundation starts with the writing. I think the biggest challenge in these things is finding really great scripts that are ultimately going to connect with the audience or connect with their soul and spirit that's going to really say, "Wow, I needed that." Those types of projects, you spend a long time writing, it could take three months to six months to write a great script, maybe longer. It could go through 10, 20 drafts. You never know how many it can go through, and so that's the piece that takes the most time to get right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: As we have been talking, I've been thinking about the old statement that, "Anything that smacks of righteousness, all hell will be against." And I wonder when you guys are in the midst of everything, again, from concept to final production, have you ever come across a movie where you felt like there's some real darkness here, it's like we're fighting evil, it's like the enemy is against this? Anything come to mind for either of you, Michael or Bill?

Michael Scott: I think there's projects that we've seen where you can sometimes battle a director or a writer where they say they get what you're looking for, but they really don't and they want to drive it in a different direction. What they think is right and it may go against whether it's your values or something spiritual or something like that. And it's this constant recentering sometimes of getting that to come together. It can be really tricky. I think that sometimes there's a little bit of, some creators are using this as a stepping stone to get to Hollywood and then they will try and drive a more secular project versus a faith-based or family values project. And so you're constantly battling that to make sure that those things are kept and done right for what you know that's needed.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I know we're battling time here, Michael and Bill, already. It's just hard to believe time just flies this fast. But as we've been talking, I was reflecting back in my mind, here you are, God's taken you guys from a dream to having this major influence in culture. You've become the number one distributor of faith and family movies, content and more and it's like that, could you have ever imagined? But I wonder, God's doing some amazing things right now, what's on the horizon for Pure Flix and where do you see all this going and what are you praying for? What's your God sight's dream as you look to the road forward?

Bill Abbott: It is being that beacon of light that is just so needed and will encourage people and will reaffirm their faith. Faith, family, country is the way we've approached it at Great American Media. And I think that the forces that are out there that are fighting against us are certainly very strong. Fortunately in the new world in which we're working together, Pure Flix plus Great American Media makes us much stronger and puts us in a position where we can be that beacon of light and in our mind we are on a trajectory that we will get to that point. That content and the high quality standard that's been set by Pure Flix can continue and also impact Great American Media in a positive way. And that we will offer a variety of content for people that they will love and they'll be entertained by. And at the same time as they're being entertained, they can be fulfilled and they can have their cup filled with positivity and redemption and qualities that are so important.

Michael Scott: I think, Bill, with what he's done with Great American, Hallmark and a lot of these in the past. There's going to be a larger footprint for this content to go out through cable, through Pure Flix, through fast channels, all these types of things. So it's going to grow rapidly and Bill has a great handle on how to drive content, how to drive the network. The future is extremely bright under Bill's leadership and I think that you will see incredible stories being told in the months and years to come. I'm going to be excited to see what happens.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Well, it's an amazing, wild industry. We know it's rapidly changing, we know you guys, it's like riding a wild Bronco out there in Hollywood. But from producing movies to streaming content and so much more, may God expand your borders. And I know you guys are doing that very thing, this whole new piece with Great American Media, it's a game changer for both of you, isn't it?

Bill Abbott: Well, that's just it. It's those synergies that can make both brands so much bigger, more widely known, more widely viewed. That is the vision to offer an oasis.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Let's close this way, Michael, Bill, God has opened a tremendous door of opportunity. We also know there are many adversaries, as Paul would say, challenges along the way, and in order to maintain that mission that we've talked about upfront, it takes lives that are anchored in him and are dedicated to those eternal purposes. Michael, closing thought from your heart to those who would listen right now, who are interested in Pure Flix, maybe they don't have it at home. I mean, where can they learn more and what can you say to them about your heart and what this looks like going forward?

Michael Scott: Like I said, I think it's going to be incredible. I think that people are going to be able to access it on the network. They should check out Great American Family right now on your TVs, tune in, they've got great movies coming. And then the same thing, if they want Pure Flix, more of that streaming video on demand or that Netflix experience where you can watch what you want when you want without ads or anything like that, they can sign up for Pure Flix at Pureflix.com for one monthly fee and get access to thousands of movies and television shows that they can watch with their family. And we have content that will speak to everybody. You want drama, you want comedy, you want romance, you want adventure, action, whatever it might be, we have something for everybody because not all content needs to be the same. We all have different tastes and different things and so I think you'll find something on there, and especially for the kids as well. There's tons of kids content on there-

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's encouraging.

Michael Scott: So I say, come and check it out, you're going to watch in the months and the years to come, more shows, more television shows, more movies that are going to be made for both of these, the network and for the streaming that are going to touch lives and people. And I'm excited. I'll be making more content in the future and I'm excited to the different stories I'll be able to tell and share with Bill and his team on the Pure Flix side and people are going to be excited and I think the world's changing. I say, if you want something different, give us a try.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And Bill, I'm going to give you the closing word.

Bill Abbott: Well, we take this responsibility very seriously because it is a big responsibility to not disappoint viewers, subscribers and to be true to the mission and we will be absolutely unyielding in doing that. And we just are so appreciative of what Michael has built and we want to honor it, treasure it and build on it.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Michael, Bill, what a delight to have both of you. On behalf of Dr. Dobson and his wife, Shirley, our entire team here at Family Talk, we salute you and pray that God would do that very thing, expand your borders so much so that you can't even receive it. And then that you would steward it with the hand of God behind you. Thank you so much for joining us.

Michael Scott: Thank you, Tim.

Bill Abbott: Thank you very much, Tim.

Roger Marsh: Well, it is truly encouraging to hear how Pure Flix will continue to be a light in the darkness in the entertainment industry. You've been listening to Michael Scott and Bill Abbott from Pure Flix, along with our co-host, Dr. Tim Clinton, right here on Family Talk. I hope you have a subscription to Pure Flix to watch good, wholesome, God-honoring content at home or maybe you'll consider getting a subscription after listening to this interview, especially if you have kids. I know Lisa and I really enjoy our Pure Flix subscription and especially with kids in the home or grandkids who stop by every now and again, it's nice to have that option. One issue that we have seen that has been affecting our children is the attack on gender, so how can Christians effectively engage with and address the rising tide of transgenderism?

Dr. Owen Strachan has written a book on the topic, it's titled, What Does the Bible Teach about Transgenderism? Dr. Strachan has a unique understanding of the complexities involved. His insights can help deepen your perspective on this crucial issue. Down here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we have collaborated with Dr. Strachan to compile a wide range of helpful resources for you on this topic. You can access that list online right now. There's no cost for getting the list. Just go to Drjamesdobson.org/transgenderism. That's D-R Jamesdobson.O-R-G/transgenderism. I'm Roger Marsh and from all of us here at the JDFI, thank you for making us a part of your day today and every day. May God continue to richly bless, strengthen and encourage you to grow in your walk with him. And be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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