



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Bible from 30,000 Feet – Part 1

Guest(s): Skip Heitzig

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Dr. James Dobson: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Roger Marsh: Welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, thanking you for joining us for today's classic program. What you're about to hear is a conversation our own Dr. James Dobson had, back in 2018, with his special guest, Skip Heitzig. Skip is the founder and senior pastor of Calvary Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He's also an author and, today, we'll be discussing his book called *The Bible From 30,000 Feet*. This practical resource takes you through the Bible in a year. Once completed, you will no doubt develop a stronger understanding of each book in the Bible. And, keep in mind, you can also get the accompanying workbook to guide you deeper into the lessons. Skip will be sharing his story and will share with us how he came to know Jesus as his Lord and Savior. You'll even hear how he was called to ministry and how, amazingly, the late Reverend Billy Graham was a part of that journey. Dr. Dobson will share a bit more about Skip right now. Let's join the conversation here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: We have a guest here today by the name of Skip Heitzig. I just want to give you a little of his background because I want you to know him. He went to UCLA and received a degree in radiology, but the Lord was calling him in another direction into the ministry, but he has now written a book called *The Bible from 30,000 Feet: Soaring Through the Scriptures*. You're going to want to read this book if you want to be able to understand the Bible and read it in a different way. Can I call you Skip?

Skip Heitzig: Yes, sir.

Dr. James Dobson: I'm Jim. It is a delight to have you here.

Skip Heitzig: It is my delight to be here. I've heard you for years and this is a real privilege.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, we've got an awful lot to talk about. I said I wanted people to know you. Before we get into the book, would you give me your testimony? Where have you come from? The Lord is using you in dramatic ways, but when did that start? Did you grow up in a Christian home?

Skip Heitzig: I grew up in a Catholic home, so I had the basics. I rebelled against that, it was ritual to me. Grew up in Southern California. My father was austere. My mom was as sweet as could be, four boys. I'm the youngest of four boys. And it was 1973 that I was away from my parents, I was up visiting my brother to go to San Jose State up in San Jose, California, and it was his apartment. I had been looking for a job and it was an afternoon where I turned television on all alone in an apartment. Billy Graham was preaching. I decided, as I was going through, I don't know how many channels, to stop and listen. And it's interesting, my father, though I was Catholic, he loved Billy Graham and he loved him because he was a good communicator. And my father said, "One of the things you boys need to do is you need to go to college, you need to take public speaking courses because you need to know how to communicate, and you need to play golf." Those are his three requirements.

Dr. James Dobson: Golf.

Skip Heitzig: Golf. And his rationale is-

Dr. James Dobson: How does that fit with the others?

Skip Heitzig: Well, his rationale is, if you're in the business world and you want to close a deal, if you want to talk about business, you're not going to probably take him to a football field or a basketball court as much as you would playing a game of golf, so we all played golf. My brother became a PGA pro, a teaching pro, in Palm Springs. And so I was watching Billy Graham because he said, "Watch him. Watch what he does and how he communicates," and he loved also-

Dr. James Dobson: Your dad wasn't really interested in the message of the gospel. He wanted you to learn something that would be useful to you.

Skip Heitzig: Yes. It was a tool for communication. However, he loved the simplicity with which Dr. Graham proclaimed. And so, that afternoon in San Jose, as I turn on the television, I said, "I'm going to listen to what he has to say," because I had never really listened to a full message, knew who he was, but he was preaching to a stadium, I believe, in Seattle. It was 1973, summer. I decided I'm going to grab a beer and watch a Billy Graham crusade. It's an interesting combination, but, by the end of the message, he was talking about a relationship with Jesus Christ. I'd never heard that phrase, I never knew it was possible, and something inside of me said, "If I was in that stadium, I would go on that field," but at least I have the safety of a television. These are the thoughts.

And I'm about to turn off the television, walking up to it to turn it off, and he turns right to the camera as if he's looking right at me, and he said, "If you're watching about television, you can know Christ." And it was as if the Holy Spirit was speaking through him. I turned it off, and all I can say is I went into my bedroom and I had a very simple conversation with God. It wasn't a fancy prayer. I just said, "It doesn't make sense to me that you want my life. I don't

understand why you would want a relationship with me, why you would die for me. I don't know why that would be, but it seems to me like you're getting a bad deal." That's what I told him. "You're getting a bad deal and I'm getting a great deal and it would be stupid for me to pass this deal up. It's the deal of a lifetime for me to give you my life and have you give me eternal life, if I'm hearing the message correctly."

And I said a simple prayer like that. And I didn't hear a voice, I didn't see anything, but I felt as if a burden was lifted. And I didn't know what that meant or what it was exactly. I just felt like I was a bit lighter. And I wrote to Billy Graham, Minneapolis, Minnesota, because that's all the address you need. He sent me a book back by Howard Hendricks and a little simple step of what you need to do now. And it was at that point where I decided I need to go back down to Southern California because there's this church called Calvary Chapel with Pastor Chuck Smith.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, my.

Skip Heitzig: I've heard about it. A lot of my friends are going to it, but I need that. And that started the journey for me.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you had the advantage of being influenced by two of the great Christian ministers of all time, Dr. Billy Graham and-

Skip Heitzig: Very true.

Dr. James Dobson: ... Chuck Smith, whom I also knew as a friend, and that had an impact on you that was to change your life, wasn't it?

Skip Heitzig: Exactly. Billy-

Dr. James Dobson: You wonder how many times, around the world, the scenario that you described was played out after a Billy Graham message in almost every country in the world. It is amazing what God did with him.

Skip Heitzig: And he loved to hear people's testimonies of that. I remember Anne, his daughter, said, "I told Daddy, again, your testimony." I'd been to Billy's house for dinner with his son Franklin, we became very close friends, but Billy loved to hear your story. He didn't really like to talk much about himself, but he loved to hear your story. And it always encouraged him when somebody came to faith through his ministry, and that was just his humility.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I feel the same way, don't you?

Skip Heitzig: Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

Dr. James Dobson: There's no greater thrill than to have someone come up to me on the street and say, "Listened to your program, I didn't know anything about Christ, and I learned about Him and was drawn to Him and accepted Him, and he's changed my life." That's the greatest thrill to me. There is nothing better

Skip Heitzig: Yeah, to be an instrument of God for His glory and to further His kingdom.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you went from there into Trinity University.

Skip Heitzig: Well, so I stayed at that church and just grew in the Lord and grew in the Lord and went through the Bible with Pastor Chuck while I was working in Orange County at CHOC Medical Center, Orange County Medical Center in CHOC.

Dr. James Dobson: As a radiological technology.

Skip Heitzig: Radiology tech, technology, right. St. Joseph Hospital, in Orange County, is where I worked, and I just went to church every week and grew and, eventually, got restless and I wanted to start something. And, at that point, in the post-Jesus movement era, just post-Jesus movement, a lot of young guys were going out and starting churches. Chuck enabled people to do that, said, "You ought to just go for it," and I was one of those men who felt inspired to go somewhere. And then I went to Albuquerque.

Dr. James Dobson: Would you call it a call to preach?

Skip Heitzig: Yeah. I didn't know exactly what it was at first. When I was going through medical training, I felt called to some kind of ministry. I didn't know if that meant teaching, preaching, didn't know if that meant music, because I grew up playing music, and I was torn between them. I loved preparing for Bible studies, home Bible studies, love teaching that, love seeing people grow, so I had a hint that that could possibly be it.

Dr. James Dobson: What did Chuck tell you?

Skip Heitzig: No, Chuck was interesting. He said he felt like, on one hand, he wanted to encourage you. On the other hand, he felt he should at least supply enough discouragement that, if you're not called, don't dare step into this. And the reason being, he said, "If I can discourage you, then you shouldn't do it because the kind of discouragement you'll face will be substantive enough that ... don't even cross into that area unless you are sure the Lord called you."

I sensed I should start something or go somewhere or be a preacher, didn't know how that was going to work out, and I just decided to try Albuquerque because a friend was moving there. And it was at the same time that my wife, whom I knew and dated previously, we had broken up. She was living in Hawaii, working with youth with the mission, felt called, she thought, to the mission field, but she never really went on a mission. And she told her bosses, she goes,

"I think I feel called to be a pastor's wife," and they said, "Why would you feel called to be a pastor ... do you know any pastors' wives?" She goes, "No." And they said, "Well, do you know any pastors?" And she goes, "No, but there's this guy named Skip, we dated, and I think he's thought about it, and we had a relationship and we broke up, but I still have feelings for him."

That's how, really, it all started. And they said, "Well, if you have feelings for him, you should write them and tell him at least." Well, she didn't do that. She told her father that, and her father was a podiatrist in Orange County, and said, "Dad, I don't feel like I have the freedom to date anybody because I've dated Skip, and there's other guys asking me out, but there's something about this Skip Heitzig guy that I feel I'm still connected to him." And he said, "Oh, sweetheart, if he doesn't know that, you need to communicate that to him."

Well, she didn't, he called me, and he said, "Skip, this is Dr. Farley, do you remember me?" I said, "Yes, sir." He goes, "Well, let me just put it to you this way, my daughter has feelings for you. She feels like she is not released from the relationship you guys have had. She doesn't have the freedom to date anybody," and he goes, "I don't even know what that means, but would you do me the favor of calling her and either calling it off and letting her know there's no hope or pursuing the relationship so she's not in limbo?" I knew none of these feelings were part of her life until that phone call, but I greatly admired a man who would stick up for his daughter to call a possible suitor and say, "Fish or cut bait," and it forced me into decision mode.

Dr. James Dobson: What a man.

Skip Heitzig: And I thank him to this day. He goes to our church, I still see him every week, and I thank him to this day for making that call.

Dr. James Dobson: How soon did you get married?

Skip Heitzig: Within months. I said, "Why don't you move back to California and let's test this relationship before the Lord? Let's be very honest about how we feel and what we might be called to because it's emotional and physiological as well as spiritual. Let's just balance these things out and put them on the table." And so it was within weeks that I asked her to marry me and move to Albuquerque.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, the next chapter of your life is that you did go to Trinity.

Skip Heitzig: Yes, sir. Trinity offered ... there's a part of it called Trinity Southwest. I went to school partly through local classes and then, back east, correspondence.

Dr. James Dobson: You wound up getting a Ph.D.

Skip Heitzig: Wound up getting a PhD finally, yeah. Got a few degrees from them. Got a doctor of ministry before that, and then work on a PhD because I wanted to

write a dissertation about our church and the use of convergent media in platforming a church.

Dr. James Dobson: And the Lord has been blessing you in ministry ever since.

Skip Heitzig: Oh, my. It is the Lord's blessing. It's the only way to account for it.

Dr. James Dobson: Your church in Albuquerque, describe that for me. It's a huge church. You started with five people in-

Skip Heitzig: A home Bible study.

Dr. James Dobson: ... home study.

Skip Heitzig: It was myself, my wife, she had to be there, my best friend at the time, Kent, who moved from California to Albuquerque to do radio, and one visitor, so there was four people. And I remember him. His name was Jack. It was the first time and the last time he came. He came once and he never came back, but I remember him, and he was this sweet man. And then, the next week, this was in an apartment complex in a little gathering room, just a few people each week until we had about 135 people overflowing this little meeting room and we had no more space. It was a Thursday night Bible study. At that point, I didn't even know if I was called to start a church.

Now church planning in those days for Calvary Chapel, guys, was a little bit different than today. I wanted the Lord to prove to me I had this calling. I felt very strongly about it, but I needed some evidence that His hand of blessing was on it. When I saw all those people coming and I told them, "This is not a church. This is a supplemental Bible study. Please stay committed to your home churches." Well, eventually, they said, "We want more. We don't want just a supplement," and so I asked people, at our Thursday night Bible stud, "Anybody interested in seeing this move to a Sunday morning as well, raise your hand," and I had some people raise both hands, like, "We've been waiting for you. You're the one dragging your feet. We want to be part of a movement." And so it was then that I started looking for a place to meet. We found a movie theater to rent for \$30 a week, and that's where we started having Sunday morning church, in a theater.

Dr. James Dobson: And from there to here has been quite a ride.

Skip Heitzig: Quite a ride, it just-

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. I hear such great things about your ministry. Let's talk about your book. It's called *The Bible From 30,000 Feet: Soaring Through the Scriptures*. Explain what you mean by that title, 30,000 Feet. This means-

Skip Heitzig: Yeah, 30,000 feet is cruising altitude.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. You're getting an overview.

Skip Heitzig: An overview. There's great value in driving across America, but there's also great value in flying over terrain and getting reference points and seeing how it all fits together. And sometimes, when people read the Bible, they're just in the forest, and it's good and it's important, you can go as deep as you want, but it's also valuable to see how it all fits together, to see the gospel in the Old Testament, to see how the Old and the New meld and mesh together. I wrote it with that in mind. Actually, I wrote it after teaching a series on it in a church in California that I was a part of for a couple of years.

Dr. James Dobson: it lasted for a year, didn't it?

Skip Heitzig: Lasted for a year. And, because I've gone through the Bible with our congregation, it takes me about 11 years to cover every verse of the Bible and give exposition on Genesis to Revelation, and so I thought, "What if I could do something in a year?" And the idea was not on my own. John MacArthur did a single study one time called "A Jet Tour of the Book of Revelation," and that stuck with me. I thought, "A jet tour, how is he going to do that?" He did it in two weeks, two nights, two teachings. And I thought, "Well, I could do the Bible that way." When I started that at a church in California, Ocean Hills, and then did it again in Albuquerque, there was such a groundswell of excitement because people thought, "This is doable. I can, in a year's time, understand the major themes of scripture." The book was born out of the experience of teaching that.

Dr. James Dobson: You would, and I would, disagree strongly with the people who say the Old Testament is passe, forget the Old Testament, concentrate only on the New Testament because the Old Testament is irrelevant to today and certainly irrelevant to the rest of the Scripture, the New Testament.

Skip Heitzig: I would strongly disagree with that. Augustine put it this way, he said, "The new is in the old concealed. The old is in the new revealed." And it's such a good way of seeing that the Old Testament anticipated the New explains, the New explains question marks that are left in the Old Testament. You wouldn't understand books of the New Testament unless you had some working knowledge of the Old. How would you understand Hebrews without some familiarity with Leviticus or the first five books of Moses, and Jesus' quote ... that was His Bible was the Old Testament. It was the Apostles' Bible. Paul taught, in the Book of Acts, he taught the people of Ephesus, the whole council of God. The working manuscripts he was referring to were Old Testament books.

Dr. James Dobson: How many Scriptures, prophetic Scriptures, do you think there are in the Old Testament that point specifically and directly to Jesus Christ in his coming?

Skip Heitzig: I think there are over 300, some said 330. Some are more obvious than others. I think it was Peter Stoner who did this great study on prophetic Scripture in Christ fulfilling eight and then 16 and then 45 Scriptures and to show how exponentially impossible, without the hand of God, the fulfillment of those would be. But it's guessed at about 300-plus.

Dr. James Dobson: The phrase I like is the one that says, "The Old Testament says He's coming. The New Testament says He's here."

Skip Heitzig: That's good.

Dr. James Dobson: And one leads directly into the other. That's really what you're trying to say. It's a continuous book. It's a continuous story, narrative, and you can't understand one without the other really.

Skip Heitzig: That's how God interjects himself after creation and after the fall and fixes the problem and woos a nation to himself and appoints leaders and makes sure that the Messiah comes through that lineage and always showing that He's faithful and that He has a plan.

Dr. James Dobson: Imagine Abraham being told by God to sacrifice Isaac, the promised son, the one that couldn't have come, couldn't have been, because his mother was already 90 years of age and Abraham was 100. God fulfilled a promise. Then all the promises to the Jewish people made to Abraham depended upon the survival of Isaac, and Isaac carried his own wood out to the mountain where he was going to be sacrificed as Jesus carried the cross to Calvary. And it's all one continuous story, isn't it?

Skip Heitzig: It is. In fact, I love that story because of the hints the Holy Spirit puts in there. He says, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac." Well, it wasn't his only son. There was Ishmael, but he referred to Isaac as his only son. And it says, "Take your only son, whom you love," the first time love is used in the Bible it's in reference to a father, it's love for his son, "and sacrifice on a hill," where, later, Jesus would be crucified. The imagery, the fingerprints of the Holy Spirit are pretty obvious in that.

Dr. James Dobson: And they're all through the Old Testament. So many of the stories point directly to the coming of the Messiah and what His ministry was like in those three years. They just all have this. It's the same story.

Skip Heitzig: Yeah. It is the same. It's His story. History, has been said, is His story. And so it's God's narrative woven into human lives

Dr. James Dobson: Now ow have you organized this book to cover all of the Scriptures?

Skip Heitzig: Well, we did all 66 books in a row, but we put them in 52 chapters. The opening chapter, I make a promise, "Give me a year and I'll give you the Bible," meaning,

if you can commit to these chapters, 52 of them in a year, you will have a working knowledge of the themes of each book of the Bible and, basically, what God is trying to say to you.

Dr. James Dobson: Walk us through the early stages, then, of the presentation.

Skip Heitzig: What we do is there's an acronym in the book, F-L-I-G-H-T, FLIGHT, to keep up with the theme of the Bible from 30,000 feet. I begin with the facts of the book. The F in flight stands for the basic facts, who wrote the book, when and why. L is landmarks. It's the major Bible themes or theological themes you're going to hit in the book. I is the itinerary. I give an outline of each book, very quick outline. For instance, in Genesis, four great events followed by four great men. That's the whole book of Genesis. The four great events are formation of the earth, the creation, the fall of man, the flood, and the fallout from rebellion. Those are the four great events, easy to commit to memory, and then four great men, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph. That's the entire message of the book of Genesis. And then there's material that explains those principles into one's personal life.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you've got me hooked. You sent me, or your publisher sent me, this book. This is not like other books. This is a reference book on the Bible. Is that an accurate way to describe it?

Skip Heitzig: I think that's an accurate way. There have been books like it in the past. I think it needs to be refreshed in every generation. The difference is this is very practical. It's not just knowledge, it's what are the principles God wants you to know from the books of the Bible and what do they mean to you personally and how could they transform your life? How could you put them into practice?

Dr. James Dobson: Have you been to the Bible museum?

Skip Heitzig: I haven't, but that's a goal.

Dr. James Dobson: You must do that. Skip, we are out of time, but would you be with us for another day?

Skip Heitzig: I'd love to.

Dr. James Dobson: I want to really get into the substance of this. We're talking to Pastor Skip Heitzig, who is the pastor of?

Skip Heitzig: Calvary Church in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Dr. James Dobson: And you will be with us next time as you take us through the rest of the Bible.

Skip Heitzig: Love it.

Roger Marsh:

In 2 Timothy chapter three, verses 16 and 17, the Apostle Paul writes, "All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." You've been listening to Family Talk, and that was part one of the conversation Skip Heitzig had with our own Dr. James Dobson. If you missed any part of today's program, please visit our website at drjamesdobson.org.

It is clear that Skip Heitzig is working hard to pass God's word onto future generations. And, here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we have an eight-disk video DVD series to help you live out God's word in your marriage or in your calling as a parent. It's called "Building a Family Legacy," and it's created by Dr. Dobson himself. For a suggested donation of \$50, you can order your copy right now. To do so online, just visit drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org, or give us a call at 877-732-6825.

I'm Roger Marsh thanking you for joining us for today's classic program. Be sure to join us again tomorrow for part two of this fascinating conversation with Pastor Skip Heitzig right here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Til then, may God's richest blessings continue to cover you and your family.

Announcer:

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