



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Workplace Grace: Your Spiritual Influence at Work – Part 1

Guest(s): Dr. Walt Larimore and Dr. Bill Peel

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Dr. James Dobson: Hello everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and thank you for joining us for this program.

Roger Marsh: In 1 Peter 4:10, we read, "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." Welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh and we're about to hear a classic program from our Family Talk archives featuring Dr. Walt Larimore and Dr. Bill Peel. Did you know that God has called each of us to serve Him? Now, you might think of serving God as something that applies only to a pastor or someone who works in the mission field, but guess what? You are included as well, even if you never travel beyond your day-to-day routine, one of the greatest mission fields there is your workplace.

Now we're about to hear a conversation featuring Dr. Walt Larimore and Dr. Bill Peel and our own Dr. James Dobson talking about workplace grace. But first though, I'd like to give you an update since when this program originally aired. In 2021, Dr. Walt Larimore officially retired from his work as a physician. He's pleased to let you know that after 40 years in medicine, he successfully delivered over 1500 babies. Dr. Bill Peel retired from his service as executive director of the Center for Faith and Work at LeTourneau University in 2020. He currently serves as president and founder of Foundations for Living 24/7 Project. Now here is Dr. Dobson from the original recording to tell you a bit more about his guests.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, our guests today are two longtime friends of mine who are both very, very accomplished. Let me introduce to those who don't know either of them, at least not from this microphone, who they really are. Dr. Walt Larimore and I worked together at Focus on the Family many years ago when he was vice president of medical outreach. He has been and is a physician in private practice, has been for more than 30 years, and his credentials are frankly too numerous to list. I have them in front of me, but it'd take the whole program to talk about him. He earned his M.D. from Louisiana State University and did his residency at Duke University. And Walt, it's always good to have you back.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Good to be here. Jim.

Dr. James Dobson: You are a good man. You love the Lord. And you have been working in the area of medicine for all those years. Are you encouraged by where we are in a pro-life movement and where things are going in your field?

Dr. Walt Larimore: I wasn't six months ago, Jim. My belief is that had Americans decided differently than they did, that Christian physicians would have been extinct within just a few years.

Dr. James Dobson: Because guys would leave the field?

Dr. Walt Larimore: No, because of religious freedom issues. I think that some of the guidelines on requiring physicians to refer for abortions who couldn't or wouldn't would lose their license. I think there's people that could have lost their board certification.

Dr. James Dobson: So it's religious liberty issues that-

Dr. Walt Larimore: Issues were huge. And you know how it is with pro-life centers that in California, the requirement, the requirement to advocate for abortions. And I remember when you called out to the centers and said, you can't do that. You can't do that. I think those laws very likely would've occurred. And I'm thankful to the Lord that at least for now there's been a stemming of that and that Christians in healthcare can and should bring their faith to work.

Dr. James Dobson: There was so much on the line at that time and during the election especially, I got letters from solid, strong Christian leaders who tore into me for taking a stand and for recommending Donald Trump. I know that he's not a perfect man and I know that his faith is questioned by some. Who can say? Only God knows.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: And I don't know. I just know that religious liberty was on the line. I believe this nation was on the edge of a cliff.

Dr. Walt Larimore: I do too, Jim. I think the Supreme Court would've been lost for a generation, two generations, perhaps forever. And that's still, the jury's out on that. But I sense a hope, and at least as a Christian health professional, I have more hope now than I had six months ago.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, we're grateful. And I wrote in my monthly letter, if we look back on this time and see that Donald Trump has disappointed us, he probably will because he's not perfect. And I will disappoint some people too. So it's not going to be roses all the time. We're going to see some hard times yet to come.

Dr. Walt Larimore: No, I think you're right.

Dr. James Dobson: But we were at a crisis point and I am grateful that the Lord has, I don't think He's brought us to a place of spiritual safety. I think it's a reprieve. And what we do with it is what's going to matter. Do you agree with that?

Dr. Walt Larimore: And may the patience that He has shown us buy some time before He comes back that men and women could be won to Christ.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, our other guest today is Dr. Bill Peel. He completed his doctorate in workplace theology at Gordon-Conwell Seminary and his master's degree at Dallas Theological Seminary. And I tell you, Bill, it's great to have you here. Your wife Kathy and I have worked together. How's she doing?

Dr. Bill Peel: Dr. Dobson, she's doing great. She wanted me to give you her love and greetings and thank you for helping her getting started in publishing. And we really appreciate-

Dr. James Dobson: Tell me what area of really appreciate of the vineyard she's working on now.

Dr. Bill Peel: She's actually spending a whole lot of time being a grandmother right now. We have four on the ground and one on the way. And then she's doing some advising, some consulting with authors to help them get published.

Dr. James Dobson: You are at LeTourneau?

Dr. Bill Peel: Yes. LeTourneau University. Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: University. And you're one of those people who plans an educational career, pours yourself into it, and now you're using it in the assignment that you've been given at LeTourneau. Describe it.

Dr. Bill Peel: Well, I direct the LeTourneau Center for Faith and Work and it's in some ways a really a dream job because I get to focus on helping men and women understand that they're not two worlds, there's God's world and that's it. God is not interested in this segment of our life, only that we think of as church and worship and that sort of thing. He's interested in our work, He's interested in our leisure, He's interested in all the rest of our life. And so that's the heritage that we really have from Mr. LeTourneau, R. G. LeTourneau's life who founded the university back in 1946.

And so we get to help not the students understand that they're preparing to serve God, that they're actually entering into ministry, not church ministry, but ministry as aviators, ministry as engineers, ministry as teachers, ministry as business people, and that they can serve God there as effectively as anywhere else if that's where God called them. And one of the great things that I think I've loved working with Walt about over these last 20 years is we've focused on this idea that the workplace, when men and women understand that the work they do is God's work, it can be God honoring, that gives them a tremendous

opportunity to open doors to share the gospel with people. In fact, I think historically that the workplace has always been the most strategic venue for the spread of the gospel all the way down from the first century to today.

Dr. James Dobson: We as Christians don't have a choice. We really are all missionaries, aren't we?

Dr. Bill Peel: Exactly.

Dr. James Dobson: No matter what your particular profession or responsibility is, you've got a job to do. And Jesus Himself gave it to us. He told us what to do, didn't He?

Dr. Bill Peel: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: Quote it.

Dr. Bill Peel: Well, He told us to go out and get into all the world and make disciples of all nations. And that's a whole lot more than just sharing the gospel with people. It's teaching them as He says, all the things that I've taught to you, and I don't know if most people realize this, but a huge percentage of Jesus' parables were workplace setting. And He told so many stories about the workplace. He focused on the workplace in His ministry. And that's where the gospel has the real power, not only to change business and the workplaces, the medical workplaces where people work, but also change the people's lives around them that need to come to know Christ.

Dr. James Dobson: Bill tell me if you have to be specially gifted in order to share your faith in a non-Christian environment.

Dr. Bill Peel: Well, the gift you have to have is have to receive Jesus Christ and His grace. And that's about it.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, but I'm not good at it. I'm a shy person. I am an introvert. And when people don't want to know what I have to say, I'm not going to tell them, I don't know how to talk to him. Is there a way to help people follow the commandment?

Dr. Bill Peel: Absolutely. According to George Barna, about 2% of the church has the gift of evangelism, but all of us have the work of evangelism to do. And becoming God's witness in the workplace is quite frankly very simple. It begins with, first of all, doing good work and being competent in what you do, like Walt practices medicine. And if he doesn't do a good job at practicing medicine, he could be-

Dr. James Dobson: It doesn't matter what his witness is.

Dr. Bill Peel: Exactly, he could be as articulate when the gospel as here, but if that person's looking at him and saying, you're a sorry doctor, he's not going to want to listen to Walt.

Dr. Walt Larimore: You know the former Surgeon General, C. Everett Koop, and both of us have met Dr. Koop before he passed on, was fond of saying that being a spirit-filled Christian is no excuse for practicing sloppy medicine. Your first job is to be excellent, to do everything you do as unto the Lord. And we love teaching businessmen and businesswomen that our call isn't to bring people to Christ, our call is to bring Christ to people because people do not trust Christ until they first trust a Christian. And so building those relationships with non-Christians becomes part of the process of evangelism. Evangelism isn't an event, it's not just conversion.

Dr. James Dobson: And it doesn't begin with a theological statement either. It begins with a relationship.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Exactly. It begins with sharing a cup of coffee and sharing a conversation. We like teaching men and women that evangelism doesn't start with conversion. It starts with conversation. And Jim, the third largest number of unreached people in the world are in the United States and they're in the workplace where the third largest unreached country in the world. You don't have to go to China. If God calls you there, that's great, but when you go to work, you're going out into the mission field and you've got a choice. You said you can be a missionary or you can be the mission field yourself.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you guys have worked together for a long time. You said Bill 20 years. Let me take you back to some work that you've done in the past. I think of the saline solution was what you called a ministry that you had primarily in the medical setting. A saline solution now.

Dr. Walt Larimore: How do you be salt and the right solution?

Dr. James Dobson: Yes, salt. Saline is salt. And I was talking to somebody yesterday about that and they're saying, what could that mean? Salt? You want to use salt in the workplace? Yes, you do. Your application of that was to your medical professionals and your colleagues. Are you still advocating that? Is this work an outgrowth of that?

Dr. Walt Larimore: It is. It was a medicalized version of what *Workplace Grace* has become that teaches men and women that you can bring all of who you are to all of the work you do. So for an example with medical professionals, we teach them when they're doing their history of a patient to include a spiritual history, to find out where someone is on their spiritual journey.

Dr. James Dobson: Is that legal?

Dr. Walt Larimore: It's not only legal, it's required. A spiritual history is now required as a condition for certification by the Joint Commission. And the Joint Commission is the organization that certifies healthcare organizations. And if you're not certified by the Joint Commission, you cannot be paid by Medicare or Medicaid or many

insurances. And the Joint Commission says a spiritual history is quality patient care and is a requirement.

Dr. James Dobson: Where's that written? I mean that-.

Dr. Walt Larimore: It's in the Joint Commission regulations

Dr. James Dobson: ... Common knowledge is that you can't even share your faith in a medical setting.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Yeah. Well, what we know is that there's a very strong relationship between spiritual health and physical health and emotional health and relational health. So what the joint commission, a secular organization has said is it is appropriate, it's ethical, it's legal, and it's required to find out where a patient is.

Dr. James Dobson: That came out at Duke University, didn't it? Wasn't David Larson, the physician friend of both of ours, wasn't he the man who demonstrated that spiritual health and physical health are directly related?

Dr. Walt Larimore: Yeah. Well, David, when he was at the National Institute of Mental Health and before that, he and I were residents together at Duke and we were taught by a psychiatry professor named Bill Wilson. And so what David did with John Templeton funding gathered together all of the thousands of studies that show this relationship and shined a light on it in such a way that Christian health professionals can be empowered, equipped, and enabled to ethically, legally, morally bring their faith to work with them, to find out where their patients are and to meet them there, to be able to pray with them when they request that or when they want that, to be able to provide spiritual counsel when they want that and need that, to be able to do spiritual consults and referrals to pastoral professionals when it's appropriate. And I love what Bill says.

Bill says there's a distance between the pulpit and the pew that does not exist at the bedside. When people get sick, was it C.S. Lewis that said, that's God's megaphone. And people begin to think about eternal things and mortality and they meet a health professional. So these biblical principles of how to bring faith to work, how to cultivate, how to sow, how to water, and then how to be part of the conversion process when God calls His own to Himself translates across the entire business world. And Bill was the expert who wrote Saline Solution, Jim.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, really?

Dr. Walt Larimore: He put it together. And it's now-.

Dr. James Dobson: Bill, put it into words.

Dr. Bill Peel: Well, when I started working with Walt, there was this almost universal thought that, oh, this isn't right. You cannot talk about faith with patients. This is not right. It's not legal. Well, Dr. Larson really helped, he was doing this research at the same time, which was a wonderful thing. But once you get past that, you're still facing this barrier. Wait a minute, I'm not gifted to do this. I know I can, but how do I do it? And what we were able to do in the Saline Solution was to teach physicians and dentists and all healthcare professionals that they could simply help.

Their goal was not to lead somebody to Christ that moment in the procedure room, but it was to help people take one step closer to Jesus Christ. In fact, we found that there were probably somewhere between 16 and 25 people that actually, if you think back, that actually contributed to most adults that came to Christ to their spiritual journey. And so it's not about being the one link in the chain that leads the person to Christ, but it's just about being that link that helps that person take the next step and then somebody else helps them take the next step.

Dr. James Dobson: George Barna, a very well-known Christian researcher, said that more than 70% of the people in the workplace long for more meaning in their life. They're hungry for it. And we can either be there to help illuminate that pathway or we are going to remain silent because we're scared. Is that what keeps people from talking to their fellow workers?

Dr. Bill Peel: Well, I think there's probably a couple things here that get in the way. First of all, it's thinking if I sit down and start talking about Jesus with this person, I've got to get them to trust Christ or it's a failure. And that's not really true.

Dr. James Dobson: In fact, that can be an impediment to doing the job.

Dr. Bill Peel: So what Walt and I have taught for all these years is that evangelism is a process and it's just like farming. And so there is a whole lot of cultivation that has to take place before the seed is sown in that person's heart. And if you think about that and how Jesus described the heart soil in Matthew 13, some of it was rock hard and the seed wouldn't penetrate. Others were filled with weeds and other part of soil was all rocky. And then there's the good soil. And what sometimes people forget is how does good soil become good soil? It doesn't just make itself most of the time. It means that some farmer's gone along and he's cultivated that path, he's picked up the rocks and he's pulled the weeds and made that area fertile so that the seed can be grown. And so in the workplace, people have this opportunity just to nudge people a little closer to Christ.

Dr. Walt Larimore: You may be the first Christian they've ever met that they liked. And in this phase of cultivation where people have antagonism towards Christians, or Christianity or they're angry at Christians or Christianity and then they meet a Christian and they begin to like them and they trust them, and we teach that the goal of cultivation in trusting Christ is trusting you. And anybody can do that. Anybody can have a cup of coffee with somebody. Anybody can be gracious to

somebody. Anybody can pray for somebody. And then as you walk life with them, things happen and you're there

Dr. James Dobson: Crises come along.

Dr. Walt Larimore: And guess who's there? There you are. So there you are. And the process of sowing is sowing God's word into your conversation. And people aren't interested with what the Bible says about supralapsarianism, but they're sure as the deacon's interested in what it says about divorce and depression and kids and child raising and money. And when they run into problems and you are able to sow into their life God's Word of what it says about this, that, or the other, they're interested. So the goal of cultivation's trusting a Christian, the goal of sowing is trusting God's word. And Jim, people can do that in the workplace and-

Dr. James Dobson: And they respond to it. Bill, you said something a minute ago that really makes sense to me, and I've thought a lot about it. The farmer who tries to harvest too quickly ruins a crop.

Dr. Bill Peel: That's exactly right.

Dr. James Dobson: Your first job is to sow the seed.

Dr. Bill Peel: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: And I think sometime there is a sense of guilt if we don't try to rush that process and take it through to the harvest when you're really just watching these little seeds begin to come up, little green shoots, and then you water it and you're there to protect it from insects. There's a process, there's a great analogy here. And then the moment comes when that person is saying, I really have a need and I don't know what to do with it. Would you help me?

Dr. Bill Peel: And guess who they come to?

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Dr. Bill Peel: They come to you because they know that you have a connection to God, that you're a person of faith. And so if we live in front of people and show them that we are trustworthy at those times, they'll come to us-

Dr. James Dobson: And you can destroy the harvest, you can destroy it by one nasty comment, by one phrase that implies that you don't respect the other person. It doesn't take a whole lot to wreck a crop, does it?

Dr. Bill Peel: It doesn't. So this happens so many times where there are people that in some ways are well-intentioned, but their witness is not what it should be looking at their whole lives. But if we try to pick green fruit before it's ready, then we do.

We create a huge barrier, huge emotional barrier that somebody else has got to come along and help cultivate here.

Dr. James Dobson: I'm going to admit something to you here. I have been uncomfortable with those who have elevator conversations that they try to turn into instant evangelism or they're sitting by somebody on a plane. There's a lot you can do when sitting by somebody on a plane, but trying to rush them into a decision for Christ is risky at best. And I'm not good at that.

Dr. Bill Peel: Well, most-

Dr. James Dobson: But I am good at saying, let me tell you the hope that lies within.

Dr. Bill Peel: Yeah. So many people are exactly like that. Walt and I are not of what we would call gifted evangelists. We don't sit down in the airplane. I've sit in the aisle seat so I don't have to talk to anybody most of the time. But I'll never forget flying back from a, it was actually a Christian Medical and Dental Association meeting, and I just taught some of these principles and I was-

Dr. James Dobson: You're about to tell a story and our time is gone. Let me ask you to start the second program with that story.

Dr. Bill Peel: Okay.

Dr. James Dobson: Boy, that time went by in a hurry, didn't it? Because this is relevant stuff. Every Christian ought to be interested in your book, frankly. Everybody ought to want to know how they can offer *Workplace Grace: Becoming a Spiritual Influence at Work*. And we haven't begun to talk about the content in this book. And so let's do it again. Let's talk again tomorrow about this subject. Can we do that?

Dr. Walt Larimore: It'll be good.

Dr. James Dobson: I hate to stop now because this is the substance of what we came to do here, but we'll do it tomorrow. Thank you both. Dr. Bill Peel and Dr. Walt Larimore. Friends for a long time. It's been wonderful having you here again. We have a lot to talk about. Let's pick it up next time.

Dr. Walt Larimore: Thanks, Jim.

Dr. Bill Peel: Thanks, Jim.

Roger Marsh: Sowing God's word into people's lives. That's truly about listening to God and being willing to be there for others, especially when the chips are down. Well, that was just part one of Walt Larimore and Bill Peel's conversation with our own Dr. Dobson here on Family Talk. If you'd like to hear the entire conversation, simply visit drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And while you're on our website, remember, you

can also learn more about today's guests, Dr. Walt Larimore and Dr. Bill Peele, as well as information about their book *called Workplace Grace: Becoming a Spiritual Influence at Work*. It's available wherever fine Christian books are sold. Check it out. You'll be glad you did. I'm Roger Marsh. Be sure to join us again tomorrow for the conclusion of this conversation here on Family Talk. From all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute in Colorado Springs, Colorado, thanks so much for joining us today. May God's richest blessings be upon you and your family. Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family and coworkers you love.

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