



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Through My Father's Eyes: The Legacy of Billy Graham

Guest(s): Franklin Graham

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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.

Roger Marsh: Hello, and welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and I'm so glad you've joined us today. Throughout his worldwide ministry, the late Reverend Billy Graham led millions to a meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ. And because of this, he changed the culture forever. On today's edition of Family Talk, Dr. James Dobson and Billy Graham's son, Franklin Graham, will be reflecting on the life and legacy of Christianity's most influential evangelist of our lifetime. After Billy Graham went home to be with the Lord in 2018, Franklin was inspired to write about his father's legacy and his personal relationship with the man he called daddy. He did so in a book titled *Through My Father's Eyes*. That same year before Franklin Graham took the stage at an evangelistic crusade in Medford, Oregon, Dr. Dobson spoke with Franklin Graham about his book and we're sharing that conversation with you now here on Family Talk. You'll hear about Billy Graham's own conversion to faith, his famed Los Angeles tent revival, and the Yankee Stadium crusade that drew over 100,000 people. So let's join Dr. Dobson and Franklin Graham right now here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, Franklin, my friend, it's good to see you again. You've been on our program many times and I thank you for making time to be with us on Family Talk.

Franklin Graham: Thank you, Dr. Dobson. It's a real pleasure to be with you, sir.

Dr. James Dobson: I've caught up with you, I believe in Medford, Oregon. Is that right?

Franklin Graham: Yes, preaching here last night. We have a tour that we're doing on the West Coast, started down in San Diego and we're going all the way up to almost to the Canadian border.

Dr. James Dobson: I appreciate the energy that you're going to expend to talk to people all across the United States. Didn't you get enough last time? You're going to even talk to more groups this time aren't you?

Franklin Graham: We are, Dr. Dobson. Our country is still in trouble. We've got a long way to go. We're divided politically, we're in trouble morally, spiritually. The only hope for this country is God. It's not the Republican party, it's not the Democratic party. The only hope for this country is God. I told the people here in Medford last night, if all the churches got together, all the evangelical churches got together and began to ask, "Okay, who have you got in your church who would make a good mayor? Who have you all got in your churches that might make a good city council person? Who have you got who would be good on the school boards?" Then come up and get people to run and the churches finance it, get behind them. Listen, we could take our school boards back. We could take the city government back in many cities, state government. It could be done but we need Christian activists. Christian activists in politics, men and women who are willing to do this for the name of Jesus Christ and to put his standards before the public.

Dr. James Dobson: How do you explain the fact that half the Christians do not bother to let their voices be heard? A 15 minute visit to the polls.

Franklin Graham: Well, I think a lot of Christians have listened to the media and the media tells them there's got to be separation of church and state. That was never the intent of our forefathers, was to keep our faith out of politics. They just didn't want our government to be run by one denomination or one creed. That's like if you were in Germany, it was the Lutherans. If it was France, it was Catholics. If it was in England, it was the Church of England. Our forefathers didn't want that. They wanted us to be a nation where religion was not running the government. But the forefathers never intended us to keep our faith out of politics, to keep our faith out of government. So I want encourage Christians to get involved. And of course the media doesn't want the Christians involved, they don't want the Christian voice in politics.

Dr. James Dobson: Abraham Lincoln said at the Gettysburg Address that this is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people and it did not say except people of faith. Of course, we should be involved. Of course, we should express our desires for government. If we don't do that, it's going to be all the decisions are going to be made by people who don't share our beliefs at all. But I want to get to your book, I'm very excited about it. As I said, the title of the book is *Through My Father's Eyes*. Explain that title.

Franklin Graham: Well, Dr. Dobson, I've had the privilege of living for 66 years watching my father, learning from my father. And of course, when you grow up in a home, you see things through your parents' eyes, through your mother, your father. I thought about my father and how much I've learned by watching him and seeing things through his perspective, through his eyes. I just wanted to share Dr. Dobson, just some of the things I've learned in life from my father.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's go back to his childhood.

Franklin Graham: He grew up on just a dairy farm. My father said during the depression, he said, "Everybody was poor. However," he said, "we didn't know we were poor." He said, "We had food on the table. We worked hard." He said, "My mother and father of course, loved the family very much, a lot of love in the family." But my father grew up in a very simple home there in North Carolina.

Dr. James Dobson: Franklin, my grandfather lived in Mecklenburg, so my family comes out of that same area. As a matter of fact, his son, Captain John Dobson, was killed right near there with 73 of his men. There is a memorial to him at that place, they're all buried in a common grave. So we have that in common, but you know what, you and I have some other things in common too. Obviously, we were both born in a Christian home and Christian background, but we both had evangelists for fathers. My dad was gone a lot, and I understand your father was gone a lot too during your childhood.

Franklin Graham: My father started his meetings in the late '40s, I think about '48 or '49. And of course I was born in '52. My father, when I was born, spent a good part of that year in Korea and that was the height of the Korean war. My father felt it was important to go and not necessarily support the war, but to support our soldiers and to pray with them and spend time with them. Of course, all of us children when we were growing up, my father was, he was gone a lot.

I don't think I really fully understood it until I got maybe into my teenage years. People would come up to me, Dr. Dobson, and they would say, "Franklin, I came to faith in Christ at your father's meeting in Haringey." Or, "I came to faith in your father's meeting in Sydney, Australia," or, "I came to faith in New York City. I'll never get a chance to see your father, but would you please thank him for me?" I began to understand that those long absence from the home, God was using my father to preach and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and people's lives were being changed. People still tell me that today, Dr. Dobson, "Franklin, I came to faith in your father's meeting," they'll tell me where that was. Then they'll apologize. They'll say, "I'm sure you get tired of hearing that." I say, "No, I don't. I appreciate you sharing that with me." It just reinforces-

Dr. James Dobson: When he was home, was he yours? Did he spend time with you? Did he do things with you? What kind of father was he at that time?

Franklin Graham: Oh, sure. He loved to go out. We'd play baseball, we'd go hiking. We'd go hunting, we'd go camping. He always spent time with us children when he was home, but he also worked every day. He would get stacks of letters and he would answer his mail. Back then he had a Dictaphone with a big wide belt and he would sit in his office at least half a day, answering mail. He'd send that Dictaphone down to his office and the ladies would type the letters for him. Late that evening, the big stack of letters would come up to the house and he would sit there and sign them.

Dr. James Dobson: He always emphasized his desire to get that mail, didn't he? It was very important to him.

Franklin Graham: It was, but it's also you love hearing from people, but the responsibility that comes with that mail, people that are looking for answers, people that are looking for help, and you've got to spend time and prayer as you answer those letters. It's a lot of effort to answer mail. I remember my father always said, "You can never get away from the mail," and I saw him work on it every day of his life.

Dr. James Dobson: I had the same value system and I tried to answer the mail that I get. But at one point I was receiving 250,000 letters and phone calls per month and it became absolutely overwhelming. I had to get help with it, I just could not keep up. The problems that were expressed could not be answered in 15 minutes. I mean, they were lifetime problems. So as much as I wanted to reach out to people and I did every way I could, I could not keep up with it. I can imagine he reached far more people than I ever did, so I don't know how he did that.

Franklin Graham: The mail that he was answering, these were letters from people he knew that were friends or relatives or supporters. He would answer that mail. Of course, there would be tens of thousands of letters that would come in every day to his headquarters in Minneapolis, but they would forward to him those letters that they thought only my father could answer. And so he-

Dr. James Dobson: You spoke a few minutes ago, very warmly about your relationship with your father. Was that always true, or did that come about when you were grown?

Franklin Graham: No, I've always loved my father and always had the highest respect for him. My father could not accept Jesus Christ on my behalf. As a young man, I turned my back on God. It's not that I didn't believe in God, I just didn't want God running my life. I wanted to just have fun. I don't think I'm too much different than a lot of people. I just wanted to experience things for myself. It doesn't matter how many times your parents would warn you, there's a point in your life where you just don't listen and you're just stubborn and a teenager. As a teenager, you think you know it all. I was one of those kind of teenagers, but that didn't stop my father from loving me and caring for me and giving me advice.

I remember I was 22 when I got on my knees one night and I asked God to forgive me of my sins. That night I said, "God, if you'll just take the pieces of my life, you can have it," and I invited Christ to come into my heart. That night, God forgave me of my sin and I remember I called my father the next day and told him what I did. He just, "Well, Franklin, your mother and I have been praying for this day for a long time," and that was the end of the conversation. But my father never gave me lots of advice, especially when it came to ministry. I asked him once about preaching, if he'd give me maybe some hints or tips. He said, "Franklin, you learn to preach by preaching. So every time you get an opportunity to preach, go preach," and that's the advice he gave me.

Dr. James Dobson: I don't know if you remember it, Franklin, but I met you in my studio about 1983, when I invited you and two other ministers who had had rebellious youths, to come and be on the program and to talk about what you were mad

at, what led to that rebellion. And you made it very clear, first of all, that you didn't know. There wasn't anything, you weren't rebelling against anything, particularly your father. But as you said, you just wanted to go your own way. The other two men that were on the broadcast said the same thing.

Franklin Graham: I think it was Raul Ries was one of them and maybe Mike MacIntosh was the other.

Dr. James Dobson: Those were the two, right. Those were good programs. We've aired them a number of times through the years. But that's the case, you were not mad at your father during that time of rebellion.

Franklin Graham: Always had a good relationship.

Dr. James Dobson: In fact, you tell a story in the book about your getting kicked out of LeTourneau College and having to come home and face your father. Tell about that.

Franklin Graham: Getting kicked out of school, I had a little experience. This was, I think, my third time of being kicked out. Coming home, I just dreaded it. It was about a day and a half drive from Texas. I remember taking a little extra time because I just dreaded having to face my father with my own failure. I got kicked out for just breaking the rules and not listening and thinking I could get by with things. The school finally just said, "We've had enough," and rightfully so. It's a good school.

I remember driving up the driveway, dreading having to deal with seeing my father and he just welcomed me home, he just loved me. My parents realized that I was having a spiritual battle inside of my heart and my life and that they were going to love me regardless. Didn't mean that they supported the sinful life that I was living, but they still loved me. They wouldn't sign on with my sin. They would say, "Franklin, that's wrong and one of these days you're going to have to confess that and repent and turn from those sins."

Dr. James Dobson: Tell me about your mother. What kind of mom was she?

Franklin Graham: She was a character. She was a lot of fun and she was afraid of nobody. She wasn't afraid of anything.

Dr. James Dobson: Was she the disciplinarian?

Franklin Graham: Oh, no question. She was the one at home and my mother, if we disobeyed, she took care of us. She did not let things pile up so that when my father would come home that he would have to deal with it. She dealt with it so that we did not dread our father coming home. I just look at the wisdom of my mother, if my mother had said, "Okay, well, I'm going to tell this to your father when he comes home and he'll deal with you," we would've dreaded my father's return. But she handled things and so when my father came back from a long trip, we weren't afraid.

Dr. James Dobson: Tell us about your dad's conversion. How old was he when he gave his heart to the Lord and when was he called to preach?

Franklin Graham: Well, Dr. Dobson, my father, as I've mentioned, he grew up of course, in Charlotte, North Carolina, right outside of Charlotte. My grandfather and some other men had been praying for some time that God would bring a revival to the city and that God would touch the hearts of people in the city. They helped to invite an evangelist by the name of Mordecai Ham. My father was invited to the meeting by another friend and they sat out in the tent, listening to Dr. Ham preach and my father got under conviction. So he thought, "Well, I'll sit in the choir," because he felt like Mordecai Ham was looking at him the whole time he was preaching. Of course, Mordecai Ham, I'm sure didn't even see my father, but my father felt like he was preaching directly to him. Of course, it was the Holy Spirit speaking to him.

One night when the invitation was given, my father went forward and he went home immediately and told his mother what he had done that night. He was excited about it and he began to tell his friends and of course he was ridiculed a little bit. When he got back to school, they made fun of his conversion. But my father went on from there to the Bible school to Wheaton College and God used him in a mighty way.

Dr. James Dobson: Now tell us about the beginning in Los Angeles in 1949, when the first really big revival occurred.

Franklin Graham: Well, my father had been invited to come to California. Again, by a group of men and they had a tent. Back then they didn't have the stadiums like we have today, they didn't have civic centers like we have today, so they had to put up a tent. If you're going to have a large crowd of people, the only way to bring that crowd together was in a tent. My father was there night after night, if I'm not mistaken, it was something like 16 weeks and-

Dr. James Dobson: And that's where he met Ruth, is that right?

Franklin Graham: At Wheaton, he met my mother. My mother was born in China. Her parents were missionaries to China. She went to school in North Korea. The mission school at that time in Asia for missionary children was in Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea. She went from North Korea directly to Wheaton College and that's where my father was introduced to her. As soon as he saw my mother, he knew that she would be his wife. Now it took her a little longer, I think, to be convinced of that. But they-

Dr. James Dobson: Didn't your dad want to be a baseball player at one time?

Franklin Graham: He did. As a young boy, I think every kid at that time. Of course, that's when Babe Ruth was knocking the ball out the park and he wanted to play for the Yankees. It's interesting, Dr. Dobson, that he wanted to go to Yankee Stadium

and play ball, but God had a different plan. God took my father to Yankee Stadium, not to play baseball, but to fill that stadium so men and women could hear the gospel of Jesus Christ. When my father preached at Yankee Stadium years later, the stadium was full to capacity and thousands of people came forward those nights to receive Christ. Sometimes your heart's desire, well, God will give it to you, but in maybe a little bit different way than you were anticipating.

Dr. James Dobson: I've seen a photograph of Yankee Stadium when he was speaking, it was jammed. There must have been close to 100,000 people there. In fact, I've got a book of the places where he spoke around the world and that happened everywhere he went, didn't it?

Franklin Graham: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: I felt like he was a friend of mine, yet there were millions of people who felt like they were friends with your dad because they admired him so much. I certainly did and what I appreciated about him was his humility. That was characteristic of the man he was. In fact, I'd like you to repeat the story of what happened when he saw the museum that has been created there. What I've heard he said was, "There's too much Billy Graham here." Is that an accurate representation?

Franklin Graham: We wanted to be able to preserve for history what God did, not only through my father, but through the team of people around him. But we wanted to be able to tell the story in a way that would honor God, not lift up Billy Graham, but to honor the Lord Jesus Christ. So when I presented the idea to my father, he said, "No." He said, "I don't want to do it." I said, "Well, daddy," and I explained how we were going to do it. That it would tell the story of the ministry. He became a little reflective and listened.

I said, "Daddy, I'm not going to put your name on the building." I said, "We're going to design it like a barn, because that's where you started. And in the front of the library is going to be a glass cross from the top to the bottom and to enter the library, you have to go through the cross." When my father went through the library for the first time, that was exactly what he said, "Too much Billy Graham in here." We've done everything we can to point to Jesus Christ.

Dr. James Dobson: That's been your message, Franklin. I've watched you on television many times. Every time, it does not matter what you're asked, you take that question and go straight to the cross. We've been talking about some of the stories and remembrances of your father, Billy Graham, and the book is *Through My Father's Eyes*. This is a must read, I hope this book sells millions of copies because it ought to be read.

Roger Marsh: You've been listening to Family Talk and that was a touching personal conversation that Dr. Dobson had with Franklin Graham just a few months after Franklin's father, Billy Graham, had passed on to be with the Lord.

There are many lessons to be learned from the life of Billy Graham, but hearing the story from his own son, Franklin, two points really stuck out to me. First, Billy Graham was a caring father. He took the time and effort that he had when he was at home to pour into his children and his wife, Ruth Bell Graham. Dr. Dobson and Dr. Tim Clinton like to say that children spell love, T-I-M-E, and Billy Graham was very aware of that principle. Secondly, Billy Graham also realized that he could not accept Jesus Christ for his children. He knew that if he wanted to see his kids in Heaven, he was going to have to do everything he could to introduce them to his Savior and to encourage them to have their own personal walks with Him.

I think that all of us parents should take some time to reflect on the good example of fatherhood that Billy Graham modeled and then ask ourselves if we are leaving an equally good legacy for our own children and grandchildren. Remember what Dr. Dobson once said and I quote, "An inheritance is what you give someone, a legacy is what you put in someone."

Now, if you'd like to learn more about Franklin Graham and his work with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association or Samaritan's Purse, you can find that information at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. You'll also find a link to Franklin's book called *Through My Father's Eyes*, which was the topic of today's program. Again, that web address is drjamesdobson.org/familytalk, or you can give us a call at (877) 732-6825.

Dr. Dobson has spent much of the last decade talking about leaving a godly legacy, so I'd like to ask you, have you given much thought on that topic on your own? What does it mean to you to leave a godly legacy to your children and grandchildren? Well, one way to leave a legacy is by giving financially to ministries that have blessed your life and thousands of others as well. In fact, if you've ever considered making a donation to Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, June is the perfect month to give. Some very special friends of our ministry have generously given us a matching grant of \$300,000 for the month of June. This means that any gift that the JDFI or Family Talk receive during this month will be matched dollar for dollar.

I'd like to ask you to please prayerfully consider taking this opportunity to have your impact on families around the nation doubled. You can make a donation online when you visit drjamesdobson.org or for information on how to do so over the phone, call us at (877) 732-6825. Remember, you can also send your gift through the mail. Our ministry mailing address is The Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. PO Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado. The zip code 80949.

Most importantly, thank you so much for your prayers for our ministry. We strive to share biblical principles to help families thrive and we couldn't do any of this work without your prayers, as well as your financial support. I'm Roger Marsh, thanking you for making us a part of your day 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.