



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Plugged in: Teaching Your Children to Be Media Savvy

Guest(s): Bob Waliszewski

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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: Well, hello friends and welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Now, if you joined us yesterday, we were listening to a conversation featuring Dr. Dobson and his guest John Eldredge, and they were talking about the importance of unplugging from our electronic devices. However, many of us use those devices on a regular basis, especially our children. They're learning and playing and creating and talking with friends on their electronics all throughout the day. Well, on today's broadcast, our guest, Bob Waliszewski will help parents navigate today's movies, TV programs, video games and more. Bob is the former director of Plugged In at Focus on The Family and a longtime friend of Dr. James Dobson.

Now, before we hear this classic conversation, I want to share these words with you from John 11:25. "Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me. Though he may die, he shall live." And that is why we as believers celebrate Easter, which is coming up this Sunday. If you'd like to hear Dr. Dobson's personal message about Easter, it's included in the free monthly newsletter that you can sign up for today. Simply visit drjamesdobson.org/newsletters and get that free subscription going. Okay, now let's join Dr. James Dobson and his guest, Bob Waliszewski right now on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: I'm James Dobson and I want to reintroduce you to a longtime friend and colleague, Bob Waliszewski. Bob and I work together at Focus on a Family for many years where he was the director of the Plugged In Ministry. Bob and his team reviewed and rated movies and other products from the entertainment industry, and among other things. Thousands upon thousands of parents depended on their recommendation through the years. In fact, Bob, I remember many of them saying that they would not take their kids to any movie until you had signed off on it. There are thousands of people out there who feel that way and probably still do.

Bob Waliszewski: Yeah, we were so honored. I mean, we had 13 million visits a year, which if you do the math is over a million visits average a month. It was a huge audience. It still is, and people primarily came for movies, but we did video games, we did television, we did popular music. They're even doing apps these days. And so it's been a wonderful, wonderful ministry for the body of Christ to have that resource and we just say thank you, God, for opening the doors and to this very day, I'm honored.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, that's where you and I first developed our friendship and our relationship. Now that you have semi-retired, you and your wife Leesa have moved to Hawaii.

Bob Waliszewski: Yes, yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you are going to have to explain that one.

Bob Waliszewski: Well, our son was stationed on his second deployment in Afghanistan, and our daughter had been 10 years at the time now 11 going on 12 in Hawaii. And we were thinking that the time had come to semi-retire and it was either Afghanistan or Hawaii. It was tough decision, Doc. Afghanistan did not call my name, but Hawaii did.

Dr. James Dobson: Let's go back to Plugged In.

Bob Waliszewski: Yes, please.

Dr. James Dobson: What were you really trying to accomplish on behalf of families?

Bob Waliszewski: I'll go back and I'll say this and some people that are listening now to Family Talk may disagree with me, but that's okay. I think I'm right on this having 27 years experience, but if I had to grade the body of Christ generally A, B, C, a D or an F, on how well they do in honoring Jesus with their entertainment choices, sadly there would be a lot of Ds and D minuses and some people are doing well, they're really training their kids up well. But I think there was a whole lot of C minuses and D pluses in that realm, and these were parents that are overly taxed, they're overly busy, they've got so much on their plates and they want thriving children. We all do. And they say, "I want my child to be sexually pure. I want my child not to get involved in drugs and alcohol." But media honoring the Lord... I mean, I'm sure that's important, but somehow I made it through my junior high years and I made it through my senior high years, I'm sure my kids, they're raised in a Christian home, they'll define-

Dr. James Dobson: That was a different world.

Bob Waliszewski: It was a different world and the entertainment was... Even though it was bad, it's nothing like it is today. And I just want to say mom and dads, let's get it off the back burner and let's put it on the front burner. So the mission of Plugged In

is primarily to rally the body of Christ and just say, Jesus really does care about what we watch, what we listen to, the video games, how much time we spend even on good things. He cares. And it would behoove us to find out what His opinion is and do it His way and not just trying to muscle our own way through life doing it our way.

Dr. James Dobson: Do we really have to explain to parents that the entertainment industry on their exceptions, but that industry has an agenda. They really do want to twist and warp your kids into believing what they believe. And from our point of view, they want to take them to hell and do they understand that? And if you turn your back and you don't control that area and try to teach through it and set some boundaries and limits, you're going to lose your kids. That's never been worse than it is right this very minute.

Bob Waliszewski: It's true. But I will say on the positive side of that same equation, and I agree with you a hundred percent, Doctor, is I've never seen more positive entertainment out there at the same time. It's like this pendulum has swung split down the middle and swung to the nastiest and the foulest and the most violent of all time. And it swung the other way to where Christian films can do well at the box office. I often, when I speaks publicly, I'll say, "What is the most watched film of all time?" Oh, *Gone With The Wind* or *Star Wars* series or whatever, but it's actually the *Jesus* film, Campus Crusade For Christ.

Dr. James Dobson: Exactly.

Bob Waliszewski: Yes. And it's Cru now is the ministry name. Put out the *Jesus* film in 1979 and go to the website. It says 228 million people made first time decisions, first time decisions by watching the *Jesus* film now translated in 1500 different languages. Is *Jesus* anti-entertainment? No way. Not if a film can bring 228 million people to Him. So there's some great stuff, but you take *War Room*, you take *Fireproof*, you take *Courageous*, you take what's happening in the Christian film industry in this dark pit, there's a little bit of bright light shining. And I'm so glad because when I first started at Focus on the Family, Dr. Dobson I mean you had the *Hiding Place* and you had Billy Graham films doing a few worldwide pictures, but there wasn't very much.

And toward the end of my career at Focus on the Family, I started seeing and we were so excited to see... I watched almost a Christian film a month my last four or five years at Focus. Now the problem is marketing dollars need to go with that because if you ask the average person who was in church, did they know that this movie was coming out and were they aware of it? 99% of the people in the congregation would say, no, I never heard of it. But if you knew it, there was a whole lot of films coming out. And to this day that is still true.

Dr. James Dobson: Describe what you did at *Plugged In* in terms of rating. I don't believe you said "don't watch this, don't see this." But if you do, here's what you're going to encounter.

Bob Waliszewski: Right. We resisted that temptation with a few exceptions to not say, go to this or don't go to this. We just try to let people know what was in it.

Dr. James Dobson: You're really trying to teach something to parents.

Bob Waliszewski: Exactly. For instance, like the misuse of Jesus's name in a film. Dr. Dobson, to me that's like fingernails down a chalkboard. I cannot tell you how disgusting... When I'm watching a film and I kept track of how many films I saw approximately 140 films a year. So every 2.2 days I was seeing, so I was really exposed to a lot of stuff and that besides the sexuality and the violence, just that alone was horrific. But for some people and in the body of Christ, it doesn't seem to bother them. And I just wanted to say that is one of the 10 Commandments that we're not supposed to misuse the name above all names.

Dr. James Dobson: When I do find myself seeing or hearing bathroom language and things that offend me, I can deal with that if I have to. But when they start talking about my Lord-

Bob Waliszewski: Oh, me too.

Dr. James Dobson: When they use Jesus' name, particularly in vain, I'll get up and I shouldn't be there in the first place and I'm not.

Bob Waliszewski: I feel that absolutely to the Nth degree. And yet I've just talked to people where they're like, I say, "Oh, I didn't like that film. I wouldn't recommend it. It had two misuses of Jesus's name." And somebody goes, "Really?"

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Bob Waliszewski: "I never noticed."

Dr. James Dobson: Never even hear it.

Bob Waliszewski: Never noticed.

Dr. James Dobson: Didn't even hear it.

Bob Waliszewski: There was 20 F-bombs in that film. "Really? I'd never heard it." How could you not hear that?

Dr. James Dobson: We've become desensitized.

Bob Waliszewski: We have. It is the frog in the kettle so often.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, talk about what LGBT is doing to our children and teens in the entertainment industry.

Bob Waliszewski: Let me give you one example from my experience. When I was at Focus, Disney movie, *Beauty and the Beast* came out, live action. They had done the animated and then they did a live action version. Bill Condon was the director who's a self-proclaimed gay man. And I actually love this film, Doctor, except for a couple scenes. One of them happens at the very end of the film. They're dancing in a ball-like situation, and a man and a woman are just... A rollicking dance number and whatever, and then a man taps the woman on the shoulder to get in on the dance. So you then have two men dancing. Bill Condon, the director said, "I've got the first gay film Disney ever produced."

And he was proud of it and happy. Why? Because he knew that kids were going to be targeted in a subtle way. Some people say they missed it. I didn't miss it. Many people didn't miss it. A lot of kids didn't miss it. They were wondering why would two men dance at a ball together? And again, targeted by the director at least. And why didn't Disney as a company say no, we don't want that? It's going to be too controversial. We don't want that scene in there. They didn't cut it. They were happy to have it.

Dr. James Dobson: Because they're taking us somewhere.

Bob Waliszewski: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: It's progressive.

Bob Waliszewski: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: It's ever more lewd and offensive to people of faith. I have an article here that somebody put before me. Title is "Disney Channel Introduces Its First Gay Teen Romance on the series finale of *Andi Mack*." You tell me they don't have an agenda there?

Bob Waliszewski: Exactly. Who needs that? You don't need it for adults, much less for kids. Targeted for kids.

Dr. James Dobson: What's going on in Disney World?

Bob Waliszewski: Well, they've done the gay days for the parks for a number of years, which basically for families, it was the year to say, when is it? Because I want to avoid that as a family. But they have been called the most, well, one of the most LGBTQ-friendly companies in America. How do you get that? You get that because, number one, they know that you're not going to fight their agenda and in fact will promote their agenda. And of course, those of us that are conservatives, those of us who care about the Lord and about our kids, we're having to say, where is culture going? And-

Dr. James Dobson: We know where it's going.

Bob Waliszewski: We know it, yes.

Dr. James Dobson: And we know who's driving it.

Bob Waliszewski: Yeah. The enemy of our souls.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, how do parents get a handle on so many things? I mean, we talked about Disney today. I mean there's YouTube and Facebook and iTunes and Netflix and it goes on and on. How do parents understand and come to terms with what they're going to do with their children?

Bob Waliszewski: Doctor, let me give you a small example of something that I discovered probably around 2016. I found out that there are at least a couple of apps for your cell phone that if you were a discerning parent and you would check your kids' phones and you looked at their apps, you would say, "They all look pretty good to me." There is one, it looks like a calculator app, but when you press it, it asks for a password. And under that password, when you open it up, it allows kids to store pictures or video of any nature that they want. Now, why would someone come up with an app that's totally designed, hidden app, designed so that someone could lock out their parents or lock out their wife or lock out their husband from their app and not know what they're doing? Because they're hiding pornographic videos and images over and over again.

It's an app that makes it look like you can control the volume of your music, but again, it requires a password. But how can parents know? It's tougher than it's ever been, Doctor, because of even things like that. But at the same time, we have to be in our kids' world. Now this is common sense, but because we're busy parents oftentimes, when was the last time that we sat down with our kids to ask them, what are your favorite bands? What are your friends into? If you had any video game that you could buy or have tomorrow, what would it be and why? What are your favorite movies that you've ever seen? What do you consider your top favorite? And maybe even just listen and sit back if you hear something that disturbs you as a parent to give it a little breathing space, but come back to it in a few days and say, you know what?

Your dad's probably made a mistake in that I've allowed too much in this home and I haven't really been as intentional about sending a healthy boundary in our family. But from now on, I want to let me tell you what that boundary is. We describe it and actually I even wrote up years ago, a family covenant for God-honoring media choices. If we're trying to set some guidelines in our home, we can talk about them. And I think that's very important. In my family, we actually wrote it out on a piece of paper and we all signed it and dated it. So there's four, my wife and I, my son and daughter. Here's a little bit, I won't read the whole thing, but it says, "As family members committed to the lordship of Jesus Christ and wanting to live out personal holiness as He commands, we pledge from this day forward to honor God in our media choices."

"Despite poor decisions that we may have made in the past, we desire to secure the blessings that come from obedience," and it goes on and on. And it's not that we earn God's love, we know that or His trust by that. But one of the principles I try to instill when I speak publicly is that we need to be Christians who hate sin. And when we have a family covenant that guides us, it basically says we don't want to take in things that God sent His son to die on the cross. They have to be so terrible that He would allow His son to be crucified. We don't want to take in those things that glorify sex that's outside His will or drugs or rebellion or corruption. I mean, we want to take in stuff that's encouraging and inspiring and that's essentially what the covenant does in a nutshell.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, your conversation that you were describing with your probably teenager sounds conciliatory, but the truth of the matter is it's in your face. In many cases, it's the kid saying, "I will do what I want to do. You can't keep me from doing this." And the parents saying, "You will not." And there is a confrontation that is pretty brutal. How firm do you get in a moment like that?

Bob Waliszewski: I opened my book with this. I got a call on myself... I was in a meeting and as soon as I got out of the meeting, I called this guy, I call him John. John said, "Hey, I walked in last night. There was a certain Disney show on, I don't know much about it. It looked like this boy-girl thing wasn't great. My fifteen-year-old daughter was watching it. I said, honey, get off that. I don't want you on that. Just turn the TV off and whatever. My wife blew up at me. My daughter, she was mad at me and before we went to bed, we all resolved one thing we would call you. And whatever you said about whether she could watch or not would be the answer." No pressure, Dr. Dobson. But it goes to your question, can it be a war zone even in a Christian family when it comes to what we watch and what we listen to?

Absolutely. And that's part of the reason why it's such an honor to be talking to families through Family Talk because I know it can be, but if I can just help our Family Talk listeners be more intentional about it, more loving, fathers, especially us dads can be this way. We can be a little harsh like this dad I just described, where it's basically turn it off right now. Does that not breed some rebellion? I think it could. Would there be another better way to handle that? Hey, I don't know much about that TV show that you're watching, hon, but right now, can we turn it off and can I learn some more about it? You tell me why you like it and I need to learn some and then we'll have to decide whether it meets the family standard in our home. A much better way than just, honey, turn that off. I don't like it. Dad, why? I don't know. But turn it off. It breeds rebellion.

Dr. James Dobson: Bob, before we close the program, you wrote a book on this subject called *Plugged In Parenting: How to Raise Media-Savvy Kids With Love, Not War*. That came out several years ago and they could still get it through Amazon.

Bob Waliszewski: They still can, but I'd recommend getting a copy of your book, Doctor, *Bringing Up Girls*. You allowed me to write a chapter for that and I will never forget that.

I'm totally honored. As far as I know it's the only time you ever let somebody write a chapter for you.

Dr. James Dobson: I've done about 9,000 radio programs through the years. I've never had a guest say, "I like your book."

Bob Waliszewski: Better than my book.

Dr. James Dobson: Never has anybody said that. You're the first.

Bob Waliszewski: Well, my book's out of print.

Dr. James Dobson: You got a chapter in my book *Bringing Up Girls*.

Bob Waliszewski: That's right. And my book is out of print. You can get it on Amazon, yes. And I wrote it to be very principle based. So I tried not to name movies and bands and there's a little bit of that, but for the most part, I tried to instill principles and scriptures. You won't find anything in the Bible that says thou shalt not watch a slasher film. Thou shalt not be a gangster rap fan.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, it does say, "I will not set before mine eyes any unclean thing."

Bob Waliszewski: That's right. And "Above all else, guard your heart." "Above all else," we need to have that pasted above our television set.

Dr. James Dobson: This is based on principles. That's what you've included in your book.

Bob Waliszewski: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: What's the number one principle?

Bob Waliszewski: Number one principle is that we have to instill in our kids based on Godly principles itself, how to handle media. Again, because God didn't say thou shalt not when it comes to... TV wasn't around, movies weren't around. But when you tell your kids that, Hey, Colossians 2:8, "Don't be taken captive by empty and vain philosophies," and basically so much of today's media is empty in vain, it would behoove us to use the Colossians 2:8 as a principle to guide our life. Here's another one, WWJD principle. The bracelets were popular what? 25 years ago. What would Jesus do? Yeah, what would Jesus do? There was lunch pails, there was bumper stickers and the fad went away. But the principle behind that should never go away. I like to say it differently. If God, the Father decided to have Jesus be born of a virgin in today's day and he was walking the planet and Peter came to him and said, Jesus at the movie theater this week or on Netflix is so-and-so can we watch that?

Would it be a "get thee behind me Satan" moment or would it be a war room moment where it would be? Absolutely. By the way, I got to put a little plug in

for *War Room*. *War Room* was a film about an elderly woman taking a room in her house and turning it into a room to have prayer every day. And then I read so many stories about people say, "We have a fourth bedroom in our house, it's full of junk. We took all the junk out and now my wife and I get up every morning because we saw the movie *War Room* and we get on our knees and we pray." The impact of a film, it can be wonderful.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Well, Bob, we're running out of time. You have a podcast.

Bob Waliszewski: My daughter.

Dr. James Dobson: From Hawaii.

Bob Waliszewski: Yes. We call it The Talking Story podcast.

Dr. James Dobson: What's it about?

Bob Waliszewski: Well, my daughter, it's her baby, but she wanted to highlight ordinary people making an extraordinary difference. So for instance, I mentioned the Kendricks. We interviewed them talking about how they got into the Christian film industry. Dallas Jenkins, who's doing the TV about the life of Jesus called *The Chosen*. We've interviewed him as well. And not just Christian film and a lot of unknowns that are making a difference.

Dr. James Dobson: I appreciate you, Bob. I appreciate your passion for righteousness and trying to spread it among families that are already trying to serve the Lord. That's primarily your constituency, isn't it?

Bob Waliszewski: It is. And I don't know where that passion came from, when I was a youth pastor.

Dr. James Dobson: You did that for seven years?

Bob Waliszewski: Yeah, I did it for seven years, to be honest with you, when I started, I was not a very discerning person when it came to my media choices. It's a long story, but halfway through the Lord got ahold of me and I had a passion back then, pre-Focus, and I started talking about it to my youth group. By the way, I would love to tell our Family Talk listeners, get your youth pastor on board with this topic. It may be that he like me in my early days of youth pastoring really doesn't have a concern for this issue. Or your pastor. Do you know that if your pastor has done a sermon about honoring Christ with entertainment choices? Take your pastor out for a cup of coffee and say, "I love your messages, but would you do a message on this? My kids need to hear it from you as you preach from the pulpit."

Dr. James Dobson: You'll scare them to death.

Bob Waliszewski: But good. And also model it, Mom and dad. Hypocrisy is the quickest way in a family to kill this whole thing I've been talking about today about honoring Jesus with our entertainment choices.

Dr. James Dobson: Bob Waliszewski, it's good to have you here, sir. Let's do it again.

Bob Waliszewski: Yes, Doc.

Dr. James Dobson: And when you get back to Hawaii, remember your friends here stateside.

Bob Waliszewski: Well, when we get this house completed, it's going to have an extra guest bedroom and Shirley and your name is on, so come visit us.

Dr. James Dobson: We'll do that. Blessings to you, friend.

Bob Waliszewski: Thank you.

Dr. James Dobson: Give my regards to Leesa.

Bob Waliszewski: Will do.

Roger Marsh: Movies, television shows, social media and video games. They're all powerful instruments. In today's culture, what we consume will shape our actions, beliefs, and who we are or how we invest our time. You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson and his classic conversation with his good friend, Bob Waliszewski today here on Family Talk. If you'd like to learn more about Bob or his book entitled *Plugged In Parenting*, just visit our website at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And if you have any questions about Family Talk or today's program, simply give us a call at 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. I'm Roger Marsh thanking you for listening to Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

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

Roger Marsh: Hey everyone. Roger Marsh here. When you think about your family and where they will be when you're no longer living, are you worried? Are you confident? Are you hopeful? What kind of legacy are you leaving for your children and their children? Here at Family Talk, we're committed to helping you understand the legacy that you're leaving for your family. Join us today at drjamesdobson.org for helpful insights, tips, and advice from Dr. James Dobson himself. And remember, your legacy matters.