



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Make Your Voice Heard in Heaven – Part 1

Guest(s): Rev. Barry Black

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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: Well welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh. Let me ask you, how's your summer going? Many families are preparing to go back to school. How exciting it is for all the new adventures that a new school year brings. Well, whether it's going to be your child or your grandchild's first day of kindergarten or first day of college, there is much to look forward to. So as believers, it's important to pray over our children and grandchildren. Remember to pray for their safety, their teachers, and for their positive, fruitful experiences. Today we're going to hear a classic conversation from the Family Talk archives. Back in 2018, Dr. Dobson sat down with the Reverend Barry Black to discuss his book, *Make Your Voice Heard in Heaven: How to Pray with Power*.

Reverend Black is a retired U.S. Navy Rear Admiral. After retiring from active duty in 2003, he became the 62nd chaplain of the United States Senate. Chaplain Black has now served in that role for over 20 years, and he's the first African-American to hold this position. Before becoming the chaplain of the Senate, Reverend Black proudly served in the Navy for over 27 years, ending his distinguished career as the chief of Navy chaplains. On today's program, Reverend Black will share some great insight into prayer and about our heavenly Father. So here now is Dr. James Dobson's conversation with Senate Chaplain Barry Black right here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: I am James Dobson, the host of the broadcast, and I have a bit of a cold today, so you'll have to forgive me for that. I'm getting over it, thankfully, but I'm so glad you're here because you're going to meet, if you have not already known of him, a man whom I respect as highly as anybody in the country. I've known Chaplain Black for many years. We met actually in the White House. He has spoken for my wife, Shirley, at the annual National Day of Prayer in Washington D.C., and I consider him to be one of the finest articulators of the faith in Jesus Christ. One of the best speakers I've ever known and we're just so pleased that he's joining us today. Chaplain Black, welcome to Family Talk.

Rev. Barry Black: Well, I'm delighted to be with you Dr. Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: Tell us a little bit about the history of the chaplaincy in the United States Senate.

Rev. Barry Black: Well, during the Constitutional Convention, well this actually predates the Congress. During the Constitutional Convention in 1787, they reached an impasse. And Benjamin Franklin stood up and said, "Gentlemen, I am a very old man. I have lived long enough to believe that if a sparrow cannot fall without God knowing it, that a republic cannot rise without his assistance." And Franklin recommended that they pray. Well, they debated it. I almost said ad nauseum, but I will not, they debated it and finally they introduced prayer.

And one of the first acts of the new Congress in 1789 was to select a chaplain and to convene each session of the Congress, upper and lower chamber with a prayer. Prayer has therefore continued almost uninterrupted since 1789. And it's very interesting that this appointment of a chaplain and the starting of prayer predates the establishment clause to the First Amendment. "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of an original or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." That's the bullet that many detractors try to use to say that we really should not have someone praying on Capitol Hill. So it's very, very interesting how even the timing I believe was providential.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, Benjamin Franklin's not thought of as one of the great spiritual leaders of his time, and yet he recognized the need for prayer at such a time as that.

Rev. Barry Black: I think that God sometimes permits our circumstances to help us to appreciate prayer. Even the mariners on the ship with Jonah became powerful intercessors.

Dr. James Dobson: Tell us a little bit about your responsibilities as the chaplain of the Senate.

Rev. Barry Black: I open every session with prayer. I coordinate a guest chaplain's program where senators can invite through my office a guest chaplain to pray. And that's when we sometimes get non-Christian chaplains to pray. We've had a Hindu priest, we've had the Dalai Lama, we've had rabbis to pray, and it demonstrates the inclusive nature of the outreach. I conduct four Bible studies each week. I conduct a spiritual mentoring class where we take 10 people through a 12-week training on mastering the spiritual disciplines with intentionality. I've been with senators when they died, when they transitioned from time into eternity. I visit the sick, I do workspace visitations, I officiated weddings, and officiated memorial services and funerals. I am, in short, the pastor for about 7,000 people who make up the Senate side of Capitol Hill.

Dr. James Dobson: What are your day by day duties there? If a senator is in distress, can he come to your office and sit and talk to you like a traditional counselor?

Rev. Barry Black: Very, very definitely. And then I interact with them enough. We have a prayer breakfast each week. There are senators who will drop by informally or just in

the area chaps. And so you have those kinds and then there are the more structured scheduled counseling sessions as well.

Dr. James Dobson: That should be very encouraging to Christian people to know that the Christian faith is alive and well and represented in the Senate. You mentioned that people of other faiths are also served, but you are deeply committed to Jesus Christ and I'm sure that you have opportunities to introduce people to Him without constitutional implications. There's no legal barrier to the work that you do is there?

Rev. Barry Black: Oh, my boss is Jesus Christ and He said in John 20:21, "As the Father has sent me, so send I you." And when the Father sent Him, Jesus represented the Father so profoundly that He was able to say to Philip, "When you have seen me, you have seen the Father." So when people see us and interact with us, they should see Jesus Christ. And I love what the apostle Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, he says, "We are therefore Christ ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf be reconciled to God." Now, who wouldn't get excited about being able to communicate a message like that? I had a gentleman he was brought to me a few weeks ago and he was an atheist, but he brought up the fact that Jesus was a great teacher. And I said, "Is that what you think of Him?" And he says, "Yes, I don't believe in God, but I believe Jesus was a great teacher." And I said, "Well, unfortunately Jesus doesn't leave you that option."

Dr. James Dobson: [inaudible 00:08:27]

Rev. Barry Black: Yeah, we went into the Lord-Liar-Lunatic thing, and then he had never heard of Pascal's wager, which was just an interesting thing to drop on him. The French mathematician and statistician who basically, as you know goes through, if there is a God and you don't believe in Christ, you've got a problem. And so it statistically enlightens self-interest to believe. So we went through that and I led him in the sinner's prayer. I had no, he was just coming by to visit and that. So the opportunities are there for us to make the appeal, God making the appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

Dr. James Dobson: And Jesus Himself said, no one comes to the Father except he be drawn, obviously, by the Son of God.

Rev. Barry Black: Exactly. It is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure, Philippians 2, so you can't even want to do right without special help from God. And that's the beauty of what we do, what you do in your work. What I do in my work, we plant, 1 Corinthians 3, we water, but God gives the increase. It's so exciting to see what He does.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you have written several books, I think four or five, and the one we want to talk about today is your latest. I think it is, *Make Your Voice Heard in Heaven: How to Pray with Power*. And we're talking of course to Chaplain Barry Black.

This title is provocative. Is it really possible for a person to be out there someplace, maybe on the work site or maybe at home, not in church at all, but to just pause and talk to the creator of the universe? Can you really do that? Does He listen? Does He hear? And often does He answer those prayers in ways that are dramatic? Tell us about it.

Rev. Barry Black: Well, I believe, Dr. Dobson, you can absolutely make your voice heard in heaven and you can pray any place, any time. I've often thought that if I wanted to see the President, it would take weeks to get on his schedule. I'm the chaplain of the Senate, but if I wanted to see the majority leader, it would take hours usually or the majority whip, minority whip, et cetera. But if I want to enter the throne room of the one who created the President of the United States, created the majority leaders and the majority and minority whips any hour, any minute, any second of the day because of my Lord Jesus Christ, I can enter boldly into His throne room.

And he tells me, First Thessalonians 5:17, to pray continuously, to pray without ceasing. Prayer is the only thing that we as people of faith are told to do continuously. It is the breath of the soul. Not only that, but we get help. That's one of the reasons why we can make our voices heard in Heaven. Romans 8:26 says, "We do not know how to pray." It's amazing how perceptive Scripture is. It's honest. You don't know how to pray and you don't know what to pray for.

Dr. James Dobson: I like the King James version of this verse and it reads, "Likewise, the Spirit also helps our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." That's very meaningful to me. He knows our situation, He knows our frame. He remembers that we're dust, therefore He is able to make the case for us to the creator Himself, to Almighty God. Can you explain why in the world that the Lord would care about us? Why is He mindful of us?

Rev. Barry Black: Well, I think, Doc, that is going to be a question we will explore throughout the ceaseless cycles of eternity because the love of God, in my opinion, is incomprehensible. Someone who comes close to describing the love of God was the hymnist who wrote the song, Love of God, and one of the stanzas states, "Could we with ink the ocean fill, and where the skies of parchment made, and every blade of grass a quill, and every man and woman a scribe by trade, to write the love of God above would drain the oceans dry, nor could the scroll contain the hole, though stretch from sky to sky."

Dr. James Dobson: You bring tears to my eyes just by quoting those magnificent words from the hymn.

Rev. Barry Black: Well, my mother was baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ when she was pregnant with me. And she had read in the book of Jeremiah, in Jeremiah 1:5 where God said to Jeremiah, "While you were in your mother's womb, I set you apart and sanctified you to be a prophet to the nation. And she prayed that

God would place an anointing on my life. So yes, His love, He answered, I believe my mother's prayer and He answers prayer every second of the day."

Dr. James Dobson: Let's personalize this to the person who's listening to us. Let's say that that individual didn't even intend to be on the program listening today. And that person, whether it be a woman or a man, is discouraged, has really gone through tough times. Some of them are critically ill. Someone out there may have a son or a daughter in trouble or several of them and they've come to the point where they just have given up. Talk about the prayer that that person would pray to our heavenly Father and to Jesus Christ.

Rev. Barry Black: Well, I think that that individual should pray the Our Father. And the word that Jesus uses for Father is Abba, which is a common word that the average Jewish kid would say affectionately for a daddy, a father. And it is that awareness that we are, as people of faith, we are God's children. And even as we know as parents and we know from what we've received from parents, the kind of unconditional love that we receive from them, just multiply that into infinity and that is what you are getting from your heavenly Father. And so when we pray and we realize that we are praying to someone who loves us so much that He wants what is best for us. He is our number one cheerleader. He says in Jeremiah 29:11, "I know the plan that I have for you." So He's our number one cheerleader, That He is so wise that He knows what is best for us and He is so powerful that he can bring about what is best for us and He provides us with the privilege of asking Him to pray for us.

Romans 8:26, "He will pray for us through his Holy Spirit. And you alluded to Hebrews 7:25, "He ever lives our Savior." Our Savior ever lives to make intercession for us. The same God who prayed for Peter and said, "You're going down, but when, not if, when you are converted, strengthen your brothers and sisters." And I love what he said to the women at the tomb, He said, "Go tell my disciples, including Peter," that's the kind of savior that I serve. He reaches out to the marginalized. He reaches out to those who disqualify themselves for discipleship. And the only question that He wants to know as we discovered when He had His rendezvous with Peter and John 21, do you love me? It all boils down to love. You can pray to someone like that.

Dr. James Dobson: He asked Peter three times, "Do you love me?" Why do you suppose He repeated that question?

Rev. Barry Black: Well, it's very interesting because Peter denied him three times for one thing, but our Lord uses the Greek word, agape, which is a divine love operating in the human heart. He was using a lofty love and Peter responded with the Greek word, filial. Yes Lord, I filial you. We get that word, Philadelphia, filial, brotherly love, city of brotherly love. Well, Jesus then asked him the second time, "Do you agape me?" And Peter said, "Lord, you know I filial you." Third time Jesus asked, he changes the Greek verb, and he says, "Peter, do you filial me?"

In other words, if filial is all you have right now, just as you are, that is what I will accept. But then He goes on to say that wonderful dialogue in John chapter 21, "Peter, when you are young, when you are spiritually immature, you can go wherever you want to go, do what you want to do. But when you become spiritually mature, you will stretch out your hand and another will direct you and lead you where you do not want to go. Ah, that's the God that I love and that's the Christ whom I serve."

Dr. James Dobson: You mentioned that God is described as our father throughout the Scripture, but you talk at some length about the Lord's Prayer, which begins with, "Our Father, who art in heaven." That has major significance. In fact, you've given quite a bit of the text of your book to the Lord's Prayer, which is the model for all of this.

Rev. Barry Black: It is the model prayer. It was our Lord's response to the disciples' request, "Lord teach us to pray." They never asked Him to teach them, to preach or teach or exercise demons, but they saw a causal connection between His prayer life and His power. And they said, "Teach us how to do that thing you do before you walk on water. Teach us how to do that thing you do when you depart into a solitary place and there pray, and then you come out and you speak to the winds and the waves and they obey your will." And He gave them what I would call the Disciples Prayer more than the Lord's Prayer. He gave them an outline, a thematic focus for their talking to God. The Our Father is not just to be prayed by rote. When we learn how to truly pray the Our Father, we engage in a conversation with God.

The longer I live, Dr. Dobson, the longer it takes me to get through the Our Father. I used to get through it before I learned how to really pray it in a minute or so. You can pray by rote in less than a minute, but now it takes me 45 minutes, an hour or more. It takes me 15 minutes just to get past our father. I grew up in a home without a father. He's been my daddy. He's had my back. He's navigated me around the treacherous show to unpack just what a father He has been to me.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you have a father figure in your life? How did you learn what it means to have a father?

Rev. Barry Black: I learned what it means to have a father, first of all, by my exposure to Scripture. And I fell in love, particularly with the pastoral epistles that so often says, "My Son, my Son." I also fell in love with Proverbs, "My Son, my Son," and that in a sense became the paternal influence in my life. But then there were wonderful, wonderful men in my church who became father figures for me, who taught me how to connect with God, who guided me in my growth and grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That's why we call one another brothers and sisters. The Body of Christ is a marvelous cocoon that helps people of faith to develop their wings. It's just one of the great gifts from God and that's why we're told in Hebrews 10:25, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some." You need more than a

televangelist. You need to rub shoulders with the men and women of God in a blessed fellowship, and that's what I was blessed with.

Dr. James Dobson: Chaplain Black, there is so much information in this book, so much advice, so much elucidation of the Scriptures and we just barely got started. Would you be with us again next time and we will pick up where we left off?

Rev. Barry Black: I'd be delighted.

Dr. James Dobson: God be with you. You have a heavy responsibility and it has to be burdensome at times. And I ask our listeners to be in prayer for you.

Rev. Barry Black: Thank you so much.

Roger Marsh: Listening in on today's conversation here on Family Talk, I'm reminded of the final portion of James Chapter 4, Verse 2, which culminates with these words, "You do not have because you do not ask God." Well, what a powerful first half of Dr. Dobson's conversation with the Reverend Barry Black here on Family Talk. Of course, Chaplain Black is the current long serving chaplain of the United States Senate, and if you'd like to learn more about his book called *Make Your Voice Heard in Heaven*, please visit our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. If you enjoy listening to the ministry of Family Talk each and every day, we encourage you to continue to pray for us, but also to keep in mind that we are a completely listener supported broadcast outreach. Your prayers and faithful financial support enable us to continue to fight for biblical values all year long and during these summer months, it's been rather slow for us on the financial side, so we would certainly appreciate a financial contribution at this time.

You can learn more about how you can support the JDFI by going to drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org, or give us a call at 877-732-6825. As you partner with us financially, please know that we are winning battles left and right, but we still have more battles yet to fight and win, and this year is especially crucial with the upcoming election season upon us. Be on the lookout for helpful resources for you to engage the culture through your voting as we draw closer to November 5th. Again, you can learn more when you go to drjamesdobson.org or give us a call at 877-732-6825. Well that's all the time we have for today, I'm Roger Marsh inviting you to join us again tomorrow as we'll hear the second half of Dr. Dobson's helpful and encouraging conversation featuring U.S. Senate Chaplain, the Reverend Barry Black, right here on 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: With another Dr. Dobson Minute, here's Dr. James Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you remember when the world used to slow down on Sundays? Monday through Friday were for work and school? Saturday was for chores, and Sunday was a quieter day when things kind of geared down for the world to catch its breath. Now we huff and puff seven days a week hurdling down the road toward burnout. The human body simply was not made to work without rest week after week. You know, I was privileged to spend some time with Truett Cathy, the founder of the Chick-fil-A restaurant corporation. When he began his business in the 1950s, he determined that he would close all of his stores on Sunday regardless of the circumstances. He told me Sunday is a special day, a day set aside for worship, rest, and recreation. Sound old-fashioned? Perhaps, but maybe it's one old-fashioned value that still has a place today.

Roger Marsh: For more information, visit drdobsonminute.org.