



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: A Picture of Life – Part 1

Guest(s): Ron DiCianni

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- Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute, supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.
- Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. You know, there's a truth that stands at the very heart of the mission here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, that every human life carries infinite worth and dignity in the eyes of God. From the moment of conception, each person is a reflection of the creator who formed them. And that conviction is what shaped the conversation that we're bringing you today here on Family Talk. Our guest is Ron DiCianni, a gifted artist on a mission to reclaim the arts for Jesus Christ. Raised on the north side of Chicago, Ron discovered his artistic gift early in life and went on to study at the prestigious American Academy of Art. He built a remarkable career in commercial illustration, even serving as the official Olympic illustrator in 1980. That's until God called him to do something even greater, to use his talent to point people to Jesus Christ. Ron is a seven-time winner of the Gold Medallion Award, and his best-known painting, titled "Spiritual Warfare," has touched countless families all over the world. In fact, a print of that very painting hung in Dr. and Mrs. Dobson's home for more than 20 years. But Ron DiCianni testimony runs deeper still. He very nearly became one of the unborn lives lost to abortion until God stepped in and spared him. Today, he shares that story along with his moving pro-life painting, "Before I Formed You in the Womb." So here now is our host, Dr. James Dobson, to introduce his guest, Ron DiCianni, on today's edition of Family Talk.
- Dr. James Dobson: It's a pleasure to have Ron DiCianni with us today. As a kid, he grew up on the north side of Chicago. He realized early on that he had artistic ability. I mean, that's an understatement. And he attended the American Academy of Art in Chicago, a very prestigious school, and has since gone on to be an author and a very, very accomplished artist. He is a seven-time winner of the ECPA Gold Medallion Award. And one of his most well-known paintings is called "Spiritual Warfare." And it just so happens that Shirley and I have a print of that painting hanging in our bedroom, and it's been there for 20-something years. That'll tell you something, Ron, about how we feel about your work.
- Ron DiCianni: Thank you, Dr. Dobson. This is such an honor for me to be here in person. What you've just said makes me realize this is all worth it. And that there are countless families like that who've told me that they have had that painting in

their home influencing their kids. And I've even met some where I'd be in a store waiting to buy something and somebody would say, hey, are you the guy that did that painting? And they would describe "Spiritual Warfare." And I remember one time there was a twelve-year-old boy over in the corner, kind of not wanting us to know that he was listening. And at one point, he kind of edged closer to me, and he said, "Are you talking about the painting of the father praying over his child and the cross falling on the child?" I said, "Yes, as a matter of fact, I am." And he said, "Somebody bought that for our family, and I look at it every day."

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I don't suppose there's ever a day that I'm home that I don't see it. And it is a powerful painting. Ours is just a print. When you get ready to let go of the original, you let me know. But describe it for those who haven't seen it.

Ron DiCianni: Sure. Way back in 1989, God impressed upon my heart that it was time to take the talent I had been using previously for 20 years in the world, painting for real famous companies and clients. And it was time to take that and do redeeming art with it. And the first painting that God laid on my heart was going to the Scripture and going to Ephesians 6:12, where it says, "We don't wrestle against flesh and blood." And so I tried to visually interpret that Scripture and it is a painting of it's late at night a father kneeling by the bedside of his young son and his back is toward kind of a bit of an open window with drapes blowing in the breeze a bit but outside of the window are two angels fighting and there is an angelic presence from the Lord, stopping that evil angel from being able to get to the child. Now, the father's in prayer. He doesn't know what's going on, but the cross bar of the window forms a shadow on both the father and the son of a cross, which is the only way I would dare to think about spiritual warfare is knowing that we're protected by the cross. We're protected by what Jesus did on the cross for us. And so when I did that painting, everybody around me told me I was completely out of my mind. And they said, the Christians don't want work like that. They'd be too afraid to hang that in their home. And nobody really wants that. They want pretty pictures and landscapes and all that kind of stuff. And the company that I was with at the time, there were four people who became very dear to me who said, we believe this is from God. And they walked it up and down the halls of their company after I painted it. Everybody said, this will never sell. Do you know it's 22 years later and it's still the number one selling print?

Dr. James Dobson: Number one selling in what venue, what context?

Ron DiCianni: In print. You know, secular, non.

Dr. James Dobson: Are you serious?

Ron DiCianni: Yeah. And we have galleries that call us and say, look. I'm not a Christian, but all I know is people come in and ask for this. So can you please sell it to us? And, of course, God has given me so many paintings throughout this past 20 years.

Dr. James Dobson: And many of them do have a spiritual.

Ron DiCianni: Well, all of them do. Yeah. You bet. Well, let me just tell you this, that my paintings, they come from a life lived. The reason I say that is we hung the painting of spiritual warfare right in the hallway that we had to go up to pray for our kids every night. We have two boys and every time my wife Pat and I would walk up those stairs, the first thing that God would remind us is it's not just a painting. You go in there and pray for those boys. And I can't tell you how many nights we would just weep over them go before the Lord and know that He had them in His hands.

Dr. James Dobson: I don't want to make you uncomfortable or embarrass you, but is there a way that people could obtain or purchase that print?

Ron DiCianni: Absolutely. In a minute, we're going to be talking about this very important issue of the sanctity of life. We have so many opportunities to get these paintings and the spiritual warfare painting into the hands of people who need them, but we are also here to help Family Talk. As I was walking to this microphone through your hallway, we stopped to look at some of the people who have sent you mementos to say how much you mean to them. Well, let me add myself to that list. You have impacted my life over these past 20 years more than you could ever know. You know, yours were the books we ran to when we went, what do we do with this kid?

Dr. James Dobson: What now?

Ron DiCianni: What now? As a matter of fact, I do remember you and I talking a little bit about 15 years ago. I had a heart situation and I called and said, you know, what do I do and where do I go and how do you see all this? And they gave me 30 days to live.

Dr. James Dobson: You don't mean it.

Ron DiCianni: Yeah, no kidding. And we prayed. My wife and I prayed, and we had two little boys at the time.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you have a blockage of an artery?

Ron DiCianni: Yeah, three. Yeah, and it was pretty severe. And they just said that if I didn't have this really major thing done, they wanted to take up all kinds of stuff. That if that wasn't done in 30 days, that I probably wasn't going to live. And so we prayed through it, and it's 15 years later. And while I've had some intervention, I have some stents and some things that God has enabled me to live through. I can tell you that one of the questions I asked at even 45, and my kids were so young at the time. Why I would ask this question, I don't know, but I looked at the doctor and I said, will I ever see a grandchild? Now, who asks that when your kids are, you know, like 11 years old? I mean, and they're giving you a very bad prognosis. But do you know that? We are waiting on our fifth grandchild.

Dr. James Dobson: No kidding.

Ron DiCianni: Fifth. And I can tell you that the painting that we're going to talk about in a little bit of "Before I Formed You in the Womb" is a painting I did when my daughter-in-law, Mandy, was about eight months pregnant, and I used her as a model. And we're going to have a video coming out on YouTube of who came out, and that's little Hudson Taylor, who they named after the great missionary Hudson Taylor. My son Grant and Mandy, like our son Warren, who was with YWAM for a long time, very missions-minded. But at any rate, I thought it was so incredible that a question that I would ask so many years ago that didn't look like it had much relevance now has great meaning when I pick up Nikki, who's six years old, and my best buddy, you know, and little Caitlin, who's three, and just one of the most beautiful girls I've ever seen.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, I'm there now. I've walked a similar path that you have. I had a heart attack.

Ron DiCianni: I remember.

Dr. James Dobson: Have never had any intervention since then and I have a totally blocked LED which is the main artery.

Ron DiCianni: Yes, the widow maker.

Dr. James Dobson: The lord has just built collateral arteries around it, and I'm supposedly completely healthy and have not had any difficulties at all. So the Lord's been very good to both of us.

Ron DiCianni: Amen.

Dr. James Dobson: Ron, I need to ask you about your own story.

Ron DiCianni: Sure.

Dr. James Dobson: Because you've got a reason for caring about the sanctity of human life. Tell us that story.

Ron DiCianni: My family lived in Chicago. Italian families have a tendency to all live together. So when my dad married my mom, my aunt moved in, my grandmother moved in. Of course, they had my brother and the dog all in a little apartment. And when I came along, there just was no room for me. You know, my mom was taking care of her invalid mom. She had, you know, the whole household in a cramped little apartment in Chicago in a very, very bad neighborhood in the inner city. And she never really told me what drove her to walk down Grand Avenue in Chicago to a doctor's office who was willing to abort me.

Dr. James Dobson: It was illegal at that time.

Ron DiCianni: Yes. She didn't have all the fancy terms we have today. It's a choice. Or it's a procedure. Or it's a woman's right to choose. You know, all that baloney.

Dr. James Dobson: Meaningless protoplasm.

Ron DiCianni: You know what? You're smart, so you know all those words. All I know is it's baloney. The fact of the matter is, is only God gives life and only God can take life. And what kind of a civilization kills their children? On purpose. And so at any rate, going back to my story, as my mom was walking down Grand Avenue alone, I don't even know if my dad knew what she was going to do. She went and sat in her doctor's office. Now, my grandmother was a Pentecostal Christian from Italy and couldn't speak English, but I know she was praying for me. And so my mom was told that the procedure would begin with an injection. While she sat there, she said the needle came within an inch of her arm. And God verbally and actually spoke to her and said, "Don't do this. I have a plan for this baby." My mom said she pushed the needle away, got up and walked out, never went back. For decades, my mom would repeat the story to me and she would say, "God has a plan for you." God has a plan for you, Ron.

And there were days when, you know, going through my high school years, I would walk out the door and on my way walking out the door to school, I would hear her praying for me. And I used to think, well, what's the big deal that you're always so worried about praying for me? Well, I became a parent. And my answer, I got it good. And now I'm a grandfather. And I'm still on my knees now for our grandchildren, realizing that we live in a pretty dangerous world.

Dr. James Dobson: How do you feel looking back and knowing that you came that close to being aborted?

Ron DiCianni: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: And all the talent that we've been talking about and the way the Lord has used you hung in the balance on that day.

Ron DiCianni: Absolutely. There are a couple things I feel. One is extreme gratitude that my mom listened. Hearing the voice of God is one thing. Obeying it is another. Most of us know what the right thing to do is. We just choose not to do it. And some great theologian once said, obedience is usually accompanied by joy, but the joy is optional. And so I'm glad that my mom, even in her hard circumstances, gave me a chance to live.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you go on to be deeply loved by her?

Ron DiCianni: My mom and I were the closest that two people can possibly be. We had a relationship until she passed away and went to be with the Lord at the age of 88. And, you know, my mom got saved off of a Moody Bible broadcast. And then my dad got saved.

Dr. James Dobson: On radio.

Ron DiCianni: Yeah, radio. Absolutely. And I remember her crying her eyes out and giving her heart to the Lord. Then my dad followed and my brother followed and I followed. And when my dad went back to his family and he had like 13 brothers and sisters, they all thought he had lost his mind because we were in Catholicism, and now almost my dad's whole family has become saved through one little guy that chose to believe the Lord.

Dr. James Dobson: Ron, I am sure, I mean not by any divine revelation, but the probabilities are that we're talking to a pregnant young woman right now who happened to be listening to this program. She maybe hadn't even planned to be listening. And she's been contemplating abortion and destroying that child that is within her. And maybe, maybe this program will be the catalyst and the influence that will keep her from making this mistake and that your story and your mother's story will be repeated with somebody who's listening today. Isn't that awe-inspiring to think of?

Ron DiCianni: It is beyond comprehension that when I got a chance to live, God did something with a very unlikely little Italian boy that my paintings are literally touching people around the world by the millions. Now, I ask myself at times, have we already murdered the person who was supposed to have cured cancer? Have we already murdered through abortion the man who might have brought some sanity and healing to our nation? Very likely, I think the answer might be yes. The baby in the womb, of mothers today is sacred. And like God told Jeremiah and I kind of hold it as my life verse "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you." God knows the person we're talking to today and He knows your baby. He has a plan for your baby. As a matter of fact there's a Scripture that God tells us in Psalm 139 that all the days ordained for us before one of them came to be, God had already planned them.

So whoever's listening to us, if you're pregnant and you're wondering that this didn't come at a good time or it's not convenient or it's not what I planned or what I wanted. You have no idea the plans God has for that baby. He or she will surprise you beyond your wildest dreams. And I beg of you listening, don't do this. I beg you. The same way I hope and prayed somebody would have encountered my mom, but God did it. God had to do it because nobody else did. Don't kill that baby because only God has that right.

Dr. James Dobson: Your great passion for the sanctity of human life comes out of your own. fortunate circumstances that allowed you to live. And it shows up in your paintings and in your art, including one entitled "Before I Formed You in the Womb."

Ron DiCianni: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: And it's a picture of an abdomen of a pregnant woman. And it has all kinds of symbolism in it. That has been enormously successful, too.

Ron DiCianni: Yes, and it's brand new, and it is going around the world, and it's going viral. And some of the stories that are coming out of it are just heart-wrenching. Just before we came on the broadcast, I was mentioning one to you that I sort of do something Norman Rockwell used to do was before his paintings were finished, he would invite all the neighborhood to come in and have their say, whether they didn't like it or did like it or it was too bright, too dark, too whatever.

Well, I do that through electronic means now, meaning I'll paint and then I'll post it on Facebook, or you know, a site or on our tapestry site. And I will say to people, tell me your thoughts. What do you think? When I posted this, a lady wrote me and said just that very morning, she was out in front of an abortion clinic trying to dissuade people from going in. And as she did, a couple came walking up, a husband and wife, she believed. And as the man saw her coming to talk to them, he began to swear at her like to get away. But the woman sort of edged over to her and said, I don't want to do this. She said, I tried talking to her and had I had this picture to show her what she was about to kill, I know I could have dissuaded her and stopped her.

Dr. James Dobson: But she failed.

Ron DiCianni: But she walked in and another baby was killed. During this interview that we're having now, 183 babies will be killed.

Dr. James Dobson: Takes my breath away.

Ron DiCianni: During the time we're having this in the United States alone.

Dr. James Dobson: And there's such anger at those of us who are pleading for the lives of those babies.

Ron DiCianni: Around the world, there will be 115,000 abortions today. Around the world.

Dr. James Dobson: How can God bless us and bless the peoples of the world when they kill their own babies?

Ron DiCianni: What kind of civilization does that?

Dr. James Dobson: Ron, we're out of time. I have loved talking to you, but I want to talk to you some more. Let's pick it up next time. Thank you for being our guest today. We'll talk some more tomorrow.

Ron DiCianni: You bet.

Roger Marsh: Well, what a gift it is when someone takes the talent God has given them and literally hands it right back to him. Ron DiCianni has spent a lifetime doing exactly that. You've been listening to a special edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk featuring Dr. Dobson's conversation with his guest, artist Ron

DiCianni. Because so much of today's conversation was about the visual, I really hope you'll take a moment to see it for yourself. Visit jdfi.org where you'll find today's broadcast. but also a link to Ron's artwork and the beautiful pro-life painting we discussed called "Before I Formed You in the Womb." Again, you'll find that at jdfi.org or drjamesdobson.org.

Now, programs like the one you heard today don't reach the airwaves on their own. They are literally carried there by friends, just like you, who believe, as we do, that the family is worth defending, that human life is sacred from conception, and that the gospel of Jesus Christ still changes everything. So we invite you to partner with us in that work. Your gift of any amount helps carry Dr. Dobson's timeless wisdom to families and future generations who need it. You can give a gift when you call a member of our constituent care team at 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. And if today's conversation reminded you of the immeasurable value of every child God forms, then I will gladly point you to a wonderful resource from the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. It's our recently updated 10-day email series based on Dr. Dobson's best-selling book, *Bringing Up Boys*. Raising boys takes all the wisdom and determination a parent can muster, and this series is designed to inform and equip you to lead your sons through even the toughest years. To sign up for this free 10-day email series based on *Bringing up Boys*, simply go to JDFI.org and search for that title, *Bringing Up Boys*.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and on behalf of all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, thanks so much for joining us today. Be sure to tune in again next time when Ron DiCianni returns to continue his powerful conversation with Dr. James Dobson, talking about a picture of life. It's coming up right here on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

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

Dr. James Dobson: Do you know your child's learning style?

Roger Marsh: With another Dr. Dobson Minute, here's Dr. James Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: Cheri Fuller defines three learning styles. Many children are visual learners. That is, they learn mostly by looking and seeing. These boys and girls learn to read by looking at the words on a page and by noticing billboards and signs. Other children are auditory learners. They learn best by hearing information and verbalizing it. The third type, and perhaps the least understood, is the kinesthetic learner. Kinesthetic learners need to touch and feel and handle things. However this type is most at risk in schools because the classroom experience is usually targeted for visual and auditory learners. Watch your child for a week or so. Do they want to read or be read to? Do they express themselves by talking or by doing? Know your child's learning type and use that as a channel to communicate what you want to teach him.

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

Dr. James Dobson: This is Roger Marsh. Since 2010, the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute has been guiding families through life's challenges with God's wisdom and it's made possible by your faithful generosity. Thank you for standing with us in our mission to defending faith, family and freedom.