



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: One Scoop at a Time

Guest(s): Ricky Dickson

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

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, sitting in the co-host seat today for the broadcast, and we have a delicious offering for you today to talk about life and faith and Blue Bell Ice Cream. Ricky Dickson is with us today here on the broadcast. Ricky is the former CEO and president of Blue Bell Creameries, a graduate of Baylor University, began his career with Blue Bell all the way back in 1981 as a territory manager in Dallas. He transferred to the Fort Worth branch in 1982, became a sales manager and then worked his way up. By the year 2017, he had been promoted to company president. And in 2019, he was elected as CEO and President of Blue Bell Creameries. In 2024, he received the International Dairy Foods Association Laureate Award for his significant, prolonged contributions to the development and growth of dairy. And he's also been inducted into the Dairy Products Institute of Texas Hall of Fame. He's written a book that is perfect for this time of year. When is it never a good time to have Blue Bell ice cream, but a new book that's called *One Scoop at a Time*. And it talks about his life, it talks about his faith, and some leadership principles that we can all learn, not only from God's Word, but also from the ice cream products that Blue Bell is so famous for. Ricky Dickson, welcome to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Thank you so much for being with us today.

Ricky Dickson Well, thank you, Roger. It is truly a pleasure and an honor to be on the show, and thank you for that introduction. I want to go get a bowl of ice cream right now after just talking about it.

Roger Marsh: Yeah, you should. It kind of does something to your mind, body, and soul. To overstate this because of your storied career with Blue Bell, but I mean, there is something about ice cream, isn't it? That just kind of brings people together.

Ricky Dickson: I totally agree. In fact, we like to say we make ice cream, but honestly, we make memories because ice cream usually does take you somewhere. You think back in time, whether you'd be on the back porch as a kid or just birthdays, celebrations, or maybe you had a really rocky road day, which leads you back to

maybe one of your favorites, but it's always there waiting to lift you up. So yes, I totally agree.

Roger Marsh: Well, the opportunity for us to have this conversation with you, with your story to history, and now, of course, with this book being released, what was it about, I mean, at this season of life that led you? I mean, you've had so many different positions at Blue Bell, as I mentioned, over four decades there. What inspired you to write this book *One Scoop at a Time*?

Ricky Dickson: Great question. My career, actually, if we could go back in time, started with a paper that I wrote while at Baylor. I was given an assignment to follow a company for the full semester and how they relate to the consumers. And so I went back to my apartment, called my dad, and said, I've got this project. Help. And so he said, you won't believe this, but I'm sitting here right now and just started this little article out of a magazine. Let me start it over. And so he started reading about this little ice cream company down in Brenham, Texas. And I thought, wow, that could be a lot of fun. Go down and interview and get, you know, maybe do some research in the process in the way of eating ice cream. But that... what I saw really did just. It jumped out at me, not, again, making ice cream, but the culture that was there. The people that were there genuinely seemed to love what they did and do. And so when it came time to graduate from college, I was a marketing journalism major looking at probably advertising or PR. I thought, I'm going to go back and put my application in that little ice cream company down in Brenham. So my career started with a paper. And so to answer the question, I thought, what a better way to end the career with a book of everything, really, truly how God navigated and guided my life for 43-plus years at Blue Bell.

Roger Marsh: Wow. That's phenomenal.

Ricky Dickson: Yeah, it's hard, and you don't see that today. But at the same time, I'm so so blessed to be a part of a company like Blue Bell.

Roger Marsh: Talk about the role your faith has played in your business life as well, because obviously the two go hand in glove, or I should say hand in scoop, maybe.

Ricky Dickson: There you go. I really like that. I may have to use that. Faith is huge. I was very, very fortunate to grow up in a Christian family. I had parents that modeled what it was like not just to go to church or have religion. They modeled what it was like to actually walk with the Savior. They just instilled in us how to have a relationship, how when the good times are there that we don't forget where that comes from, but also when the times get tough, where to gravitate to. And so throughout my career, we had some really great highs. There's no question. But at the same time, as a company, you're going to have some deep lows or some tough times. And so I model Mark 4 or use Mark 4 a lot in my talks about the disciples getting on the ship or the boat and going out and the storms come and where's Jesus? He's asleep up front, and they're in a panic mode trying to bail water out. They finally go wake Him up and I love their questions, too. Don't

you care? And He wakes up and does one of those mic drops or whatever to just calm the seas. But I go to that because if Jesus, my Savior, can sleep even in the toughest of times knowing that He's got this, then I'm going to do that very thing. And so when I can get to a point where I can let go, I let Him just take it. So faith has just been huge in my old Christian walk.

Roger Marsh: I look at the scoops and I wonder, do you have any idea how many scoops of ice cream have been scooped as a result of the work that you've done? I mean, starting in the small areas in Dallas and kind of working your way all the way up to CEO. I mean, how do they measure it? Do they measure it by gallons, pints? How does that get measured?

Ricky Dickson: Yeah, I'll do it this way, which I think is kind of a fun way of doing it. Every year is different. Obviously, you want to continue to grow as a company, but we average around 50,000 to 60,000 cows a day of milk.

Roger Marsh: Wow.

Ricky Dickson: When you think of that, that's 365 days a year that we have to bring that kind of a load of milk in. The milk and the cream and the sugar and all the wonderful things that make the magic, definitely put it in a nice place. On any given line of production, we'll make about 25,000 half gallons in a day. So if you're running 15 or 20 lines of operation or even more, you're putting a lot of half gallons out into the market and pints and all the other fun things that we make.

Roger Marsh: Ricky Dickson is our guest today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. His brand-new book is called *One Scoop at a Time*. That's an homage to his work with the Blue Bell Ice Cream Company and more. Obviously, he was talking about the memories that have been made there and the fact that Blue Bell has shown up in a lot of different places that you wouldn't expect ice cream to show up at, like memorial services and things like that. I'm sure wedding receptions and maybe christenings and things of that nature. Talk about that aspect of it. I have a hard time blending the two thoughts of, you know, this is a career, it's a ministry, but also, it's fun, it's ice cream. You know, I mean, how do you marry the two when you think about all the different places that Blue Bell can go? I mean, because as I was reading about this, I was like, wow, I never would have thought, you know, ice cream would be right for that occasion.

Ricky Dickson: No, I think you're right. And it is amazing how it does open the door or is a bridge between, and I'll just kind of leave it open-ended. But again, it's a magical thing that people just gravitate to. And I hate to say, but when people call in, they really truly believe if they can't find the flavor that they've grown accustomed to that we truly made it for them specifically. And like, how dare you not keep coming up with my...and that includes my wife, which right now we're not making her favorite flavor, which was chocolate almond with marshmallow. But a lot of times the stories of just how that product is kind of the connecting piece in family gatherings all the way to some special moments.

In the book, I, in fact, have a whole chapter on a sister who had a sister who was dying and how ice cream played a role, not just her last days on the earth, but the beauty of that story, and I won't give too much of it away, but the beauty of it is she really wanted to have a homemade vanilla at her celebration once she passed. And not only that, but the wooden spoons that went with what we would think of as childhood memories. And after it was all over with, my administrative assistant reached out to her and said, why did you want the wooden spoons? We're still kind of trying to figure that out. And she said, "I wanted to have written on there Psalms 34:8, "taste and see that the Lord is good..." And that story, it exploded. I'm trying to remember like 17,000 likes. It went to 46 or 48 states, 14 countries, and the message of Jesus through something so simple. And so it just reminded me of every day that I go to work, I'm not just going to make ice cream or I'm not just going to do a job. I truly am going to a place that has a responsibility to be the very best that we can be so those memories can actually happen. And again, whether you're eating another brand of ice cream or making it at home, you're eating ice cream, which then tells me I've got a chance.

Roger Marsh:

That's wonderful. As we're talking with Ricky Dickson, former CEO of Blue Bell and the Blue Bell ice cream story is all over his book called *One Scoop at a Time*. I think of Frank Harrison with Coca-Cola Consolidated or Lindsey Snyder with In-N-Out Burger, you know, people of great, tremendous Christian faith where the company basically has that as part of their blueprint, their DNA. How did your faith in Christ shape Blue Bell? I mean did Blue Bell come in... when you got there was it kind of a Christian culture or there are things that God has led you to incorporate in to not make it Hobby Lobby or something like that but I mean right definitely to still have those Christian footprints if you will.

Ricky Dickson:

Yeah. And I think what I saw when I went to do the paper was those very things, but in a way that spoke without words. The company started back in 1907, actually, as a little butter company. And we started making ice cream in 1911. The Kruse family, E.F. Kruse took over the company in 1919. And then from there, his two sons in 1951, all the way up until the grandson, Paul, took over, I think it was 2004, and then retired in 2017. So you had that cultural family, not necessarily a family owned, even though they were definitely a big part of the ownership. It's community owned. But the hardworking, strong German Lutheran community of you go to work and you get there early. If you have to stay late, you do it because you're doing it for a reason. You're doing it for a cause. But the principles, just the solid principles from moral decisions that are made or ethical decisions that are made, I think model beautifully the walk of a Christian or should model beautifully the walk of the Christian. And so I think even though I was raised in a different... you know, from a Baptist tradition or a Baptist background and Methodist background to their Lutheran, the common denominator was definitely Jesus. And so in good times, bad times, we knew who our Savior was. And so hopefully I added to that. Hopefully that was that addition, but I say that very humbly because I truly believe God placed me in that position for His glory and not for mine.

Roger Marsh: What was your favorite part during the Blue Bell season? And what was that one? And then I'll ask the counterpart to that question. If you could go back and do it over again, was there that one moment where you say, oh, wow, I just, I whiffed on that one. What was the high? What was the low for you there?

Ricky Dickson: Let's start on the positive end. And I would have to say, the people, there's no question. I love the product. And even after now that I'm retired and enjoying grandkids, I still can run to the store and get a flavor or two and enjoy the end result. But really, truly, it's a family. And so I was very fortunate. fortunate to work at a lot of different locations. Two of the three of our manufacturing plants. But the people really, truly made working at Blue Bell Special. And so I wouldn't give that up for the world. In fact, that's the hardest part about retiring is you do leave that family that you do see day in and day out. But at the same time, now I'm able to spend more time with my family, which is a true, true blessing.

As far as the whiffs or the swings and misses, you know, I've been asked that before, and I've even been asked it in a way that if you could erase one of them. And yet, I'll be real honest, Roger, the times that I look back and go, man, I could have done that better, the life lessons that I learned through those, I don't think I would want to have erased. Now, I don't want to go through it again.

Roger Marsh: Right. Right.

Ricky Dickson: But I think the challenges that we're faced with. I had a saying, and I don't know who told it to me. They said, your best sales call is in the car on the way home from the sales call. The things that you should have said that you didn't or the things you said that you probably could have not said. But we can always look back. But as long as we're learning, and that's just kind of how I was raised, to be the best we can be, but also at the same time know that failures can be life lessons. Man, I've had some tough times in my life, personally and at work. But I really don't think I would go back and change other than to maybe stop the bleeding earlier because of now what I know, which is a lot. I mean, it's easy to be able to look back.

Roger Marsh: Yeah, 20/20 hindsight makes it easier to see where you needed a tourniquet where you were trying to put a Band-Aid.

Ricky Dickson: That's exactly right.

Roger Marsh: Or the other way around if you kind of overdid it. And I think that's wild. Ricky, we haven't talked about your personal preference yet. I mean, you talked about your wife's favorite flavor of ice cream. What is or what has been? And now's your chance. Because since you're retired, we'll make sure that everybody at Blue Bell hears this and make sure that we get your favorite flavor back on the menu if it's not there already.

Ricky Dickson: Homemade vanilla, I call my Hall of Fame flavor because it's always going to be there. And it's always something that you can eat by itself or also put on a pie or a cake or really add to anything. Salted caramel brownie is one that we've had out the last few years that it's rotated in and out, and boy it's good. It's up there but we have some staple flavors that I'll rotate so you hit on one and then you go to the next so I've never disappointed although that salted caramel brownie right now is not out there and like anything that you can't have, you want.

Roger Marsh: You want it, of course. Yeah, you mentioned that. I said, hey, here we are first thing in the morning, but that sounds really, really good right now. As we're talking about the book called *One Scoop at a Time: Stories and Lessons from Fear to Faith*, talk about why it's important for those in your situation right now, you know, grandpa, retired, you know, you've had a tremendous run, and the fact that you alluded to this earlier, and I'd love for you to circle back around to it, it doesn't seem like there are the opportunities for young people to get an education, go to work for a company, and then spend 43 years there anymore. It just seems like the world is changing a lot, and I realize that for millennials and Generation Z in particular, there's a lot of anxiety about the change in the world. What lessons do you hope someone, maybe a younger person who would read this book, can glean from what you've experienced? Because they could say, well, that's easy for you to say, Ricky, because you had that. You started out as a sales guy and worked your way up to CEO. But what encouragement, what principles are kind of woven throughout this book that would encourage a young person?

Ricky Dickson: Well, again, I think going back to faith and my journey, I became a Christian May 18, 1969. So I remember the date, you know, as a young kid. But, you know, when you finally get dropped off to go into college and your parents drive away and you really do get to start making decisions on your own. Do you truly understand what it is like to walk with Christ? I believe with all my heart that God had a purpose and a plan for me, and I didn't want to miss that. And so I think because He opened the doors and I was able to recognize His voice through that process, 43 years at one company became a reality. I never can remember a time that I thought, you know, maybe there's something else out there for me that this may be really not for me. I believe with all in my heart that I was right where God had me. Saying that, I don't necessarily believe that everybody that comes to Blue Bell or any company maybe fits that exact mold. I believe God can shape and mold and make you in a way for His purpose, but do it in a variety of different ways. So you're being shaped in one area or one position, and that's going to lead you to the next. The key is to learn while you're in that. So He can then take that and apply it to the next.

If I were to give that kind of advice, dream big. I'm a big Mark Batterson fan, and I love some of the things that he says. The day you start dying is the day you stop dreaming, and yet the day you start living is the day you find a dream worth dying for. And so I say dream big, but the last thing is to be patient. The hardest thing that we do is we just want it now. And a lot of times, again, God sees things from a whole different perspective. So be patient in the journey.

Stay close. Listen. The only way you can hear your master's voice is to spend time with Him and know that He has a plan and believe with all your heart that He's there and He's there to guide you through that.

Roger Marsh: Do you and your family still make ice cream? In the backyard on holidays and things like that?

Ricky Dickson: No, we haven't done that in a long, long time.

Roger Marsh: Same, same. But when you were younger, though, that was kind of a staple. Memorial Day, Fourth of July, that type of stuff. I remember the hand crank. We never got it right. We never had it done in time for the thing we were actually celebrating. There was salt everywhere. It was a mess. But there's kind of a lesson I think that we can learn about life in the process of making ice cream, isn't it? I mean, we just think most of us think like consumers. I go over to H-E-B and bang; there's ice cream or Kroger or whatever it is. And you know, it's kind of a painstaking process. But if you get all the ingredients right, it's a very rewarding process.

Ricky Dickson: Absolutely. And I kind of relate the process to like the 4 x100 or the 4 x 400 race that each leg along the way, you're doing your best with that baton in your hand. And then you hand the baton to the next. And if from the time the cows do their part, we take the milk in, all the way through producing the ice cream, putting it in the cart and getting it to the trucks and out to the stores. If we do that on a regular, consistent basis, then we see success or we have success. But most importantly, we have those memories that I talked about. And so you're right. I've loved the hand-cracking process, although we have to rotate. We had four in the family. But the neat thing was if you were the last one sitting on the freezer while you were cranking when mom said, okay I think it's done, you got you got to pull the dash around you got the first taste.

Roger Marsh: Yes, yes.

Ricky Dickson: That was the oh that was huge I mean it was the reward.

Roger Marsh: Oh I love it but I'm just thinking just in the half hour we've been having this conversation about the illustrations that you've used Ricky that have faith components in terms of you know a certain type of flavor being the basis for whatever because my dad grew up vanilla was the first ice cream he ever had And I remember asking him, well, don't you have any other favorite flavors? He said, why? I've already had the best. You know, it goes with everything. And he goes, he's tried other flavors, but he really, I mean, vanilla was just it for him. And I think a lot of people in our faith, we don't think about how God might use different flavors. But at the same time, I love your concept of saying, hey, don't miss the faith experience of a simple dish or cup or cone of ice cream because there's so much more going on there. I can hear Trace Atkins in the background humming something about fishing, right? You know what I mean?

Ricky Dickson: Oh, yes.

Roger Marsh: Yeah, I mean, we don't want to miss those opportunities. Will you take the last 60 seconds or so of this conversation, talk about what your hope is for this book, *One Scoop at a Time*, and how God is leading you now in these, well, we would call them retired years because you don't go to work every day at Blue Bell anymore, but obviously with kids and grandkids that you're still actively involved in the impressions that you're making on their faith. Talk about what your hope is for the future.

Ricky Dickson: Well, I appreciate that. And I would say that the title at the very top, not necessarily the one scoop at a time, but stories and lessons from fear to faith, kind of puts in a really nice capsule to say that my heart and soul is, how do you have peace or how can you find peace in the middle of the storm? Not necessarily when the storm's over and you can look back and say, okay, now I get it. That is really what made me make the book in a way that told my story, but also how I would go through the process of looking for and finding the peace that surpasses all understanding. And so stories and lessons from fear to faith, how do you really truly turn fear into faith while you're in the middle of the storm? And from that, from speaking engagements, I've been very fortunate to speak to a lot of different churches and men's groups and just large organizations from leadership principles, not necessarily from a Christian platform, but yet in a Christian way that you use those Christian principles. But just to be a vessel, I want to be able to be used in this phase of life in a way, I call it the fourth quarter. Usually in the fourth quarter, you're going to give it your best. I don't want to leave anything out on the field, or I want to leave it all on the field, I should say, and not end up with something in the tank. So however I can be used for God's glory is really the heart and soul of what I'm doing now.

Roger Marsh: Well, phenomenal. And this is a great launching pad for that season of life, the brand-new book by Ricky Dickson, *One Scoop at a Time: Stories and Lessons from Fear to Faith*. And we've got a link for that book up at drjamesdobson.org. Ricky, thank you so much for your time. And on behalf of everyone who's ever had Blue Bell over the past four decades, thank you for the wonderful part that you played in that role. But thanks for being with us today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Ricky Dickson: Oh, thank you. Sure do appreciate it.

Roger Marsh: You know, there's a beautiful truth tucked inside Ricky Dickson's story that the same God who calms the storm can be trusted right in the middle of it. And who knew a half gallon of homemade vanilla could carry the message of Psalm 34 to 14 different countries. You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, featuring my conversation with Ricky Dickson, the former CEO of Blue Bell Creameries. And if you've never had Blue Bell ice cream before, find some. It's delicious. Now, if you'd like to share today's program with a friend and also

learn more about Ricky's book called *One Scoop at a Time: Stories and Lessons from Fear to Faith*, just visit us at jdfi.org.

You know, Ricky Dickson talked about how the cows do their part, the cream and sugar do theirs, and every hand along the way passes the baton until something good reaches. You know, that's a lot like what happens here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, beside the fact that we like to eat ice cream. Friends like you make it possible for us to bring trusted, faith-filled conversations to families all across the country, one program, one listener, one home at a time. And right now, your generosity will go twice as far. Thanks to some wonderfully generous friends of the ministry, we have a \$250,000 July matching grant in effect in honor of America's 250th anniversary this month. That means every dollar you give will be matched dollar for dollar through July 31st, or once we hit our \$250,000 match, whichever comes first. Now your gift of \$50 becomes \$100. A \$100 gift becomes \$200. A \$1,000 gift becomes \$2,000. A \$10,000 gift, you can do the math. As the only organization entrusted by Dr. James Dobson to carry out his legacy, we count on partners like you to keep these broadcasts on the air. So please take hold of this opportunity today. You can make a secure donation online at jdfi.org. You can call a member of our constituent care team at 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Or if you prefer, you can send your contribution through the U.S. Postal Service. Our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code 80949.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh. So glad you've joined us today. And thanks on behalf of all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

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