



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Mentoring: Reaching Your God-Given Potential – Part 2

Guest(s): Bobb Biehl

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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 with psychologist and best-selling author, Dr. James Dobson. I'm Roger Marsh, and today we're bringing you a classic conversation about mentoring. It's a topic that could quite literally change your life. Our guest on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk is Bobb Biehl, founder of Master Planning Group International, and an executive mentor who has worked with over 500 senior executives. For decades, Bobb has helped leaders in churches, nonprofit organizations, and corporations achieve their God-given potential. He served on numerous boards and has invested over 50,000 hours in one-on-one counseling sessions with some of the finest leaders of our generation. Bobb is the author of the book, *Mentoring: How to Find a Mentor and How to Become One*, which offers profound wisdom wrapped in surprising simplicity. As you'll hear on today's Family Talk broadcast, mentoring is not about having all the answers or having impressive credentials. Rather, it's about caring enough to ask two fundamental questions. First, what are your plans? And second, how can I help? Now let's join Dr. James Dobson for part two of this timeless discussion about mentoring on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: We've asked Bobb to come back for a second day of discussion on his book entitled *Mentoring: How to Find a Mentor and How to Become One*. This is actually an updated version of a 1992 book that he wrote that's now in its fourth printing, but I don't think we ever personalized it between the two of us, Bobb. And so let me ask you this question. Have you had a lot of mentors in your life? And if so, what did they contribute?

Bobb Biehl: I've had three or four that I consider just dear friends and lifelong friends, et cetera.

Dr. James Dobson: In a lifetime.

Bobb Biehl: In a lifetime. But let me tell you a story that shows you how important this was in my own life. But I have to tell you two stories to tell you one. I had a cousin named Bob Batterbee, and he was three years older than I was, but he was in the 50s, the real Fonz. He was the real guy that they patterned the Fonz after. And he taught me this one principle. He did try to teach me principles, and he

said, "Don't ever talk about fighting." He said, "If somebody wants to talk about fighting, just sissies and girls talk about fighting." He said, "Either don't discuss it at all or try to kill the kid, but do not talk about it. Okay?"

Dr. James Dobson: That sage advice.

Bob Biehl: That was his bit of advice to me. Well, fast forward to age 24. I'm 24 years old. I have two children. Cheryl and I aren't getting along all that well. My mentor from Michigan State Days, a man named Bill Bullard calls me, and he's 187 miles away back before cell phones. He says, "How's it going, Bobb?" I've been out of school about a year. He was still following up to just see how I was doing. I said, "Well, things could be better." And he said, "What's wrong?" I said, "Well, Cheryl and I aren't getting along all that well." I said, "I'll be right down." And he hung up. He just hung up the phone. He said, "I'll be right down." 187 miles away.

I didn't want to tell Cheryl that I'd been talking to anyone about we weren't getting along, but I knew Bill was going to come in the door in about three or four hours. So I said, "Well, Bill's coming." "What is he coming for?" I said, "Well, I told him." "I don't want him to come down," but there weren't cell phones. It was too late. He was already on his way. Well, he tried to help us in the marriage counseling and it got to about two o'clock in the morning. And at two o'clock in the morning, I remembered my cousin's advice, don't talk about it. And I was sick and tired of talking about our marriage and why it wasn't working. So I stood up to leave. I was ready to leave the marriage at age 24. I just stood up and sort of like a deer in the headlights, I think, but I was headed for the door. And Bill said, "Where are you going, Bobb?" I said, "I'm out of here. I'm through talking about it. That's it. I'm done." He said, "Bobb, sit down." I just looked at him like, "Well, should I or shouldn't I?" Of course, I sat down and we had our 40th wedding anniversary this year. But now-

Dr. James Dobson: And you give him credit for making...?

Bob Biehl: I give him the credit. If it hadn't been for that one sit down, Jim, by one mentor, and Chris, if I'd have walked out of my wife at that point, would I have ever written 20 books to the Christian community and leadership? Would I have ever consulted with 400 Christian leaders in helping them develop their companies? Would I have had access to anything I've done? The answer is no. Now, there's another story. There was a guy, I'll call him Zingle for obvious reasons. I won't mention his name, but he was a contemporary of mine at the school I went to, Bethel College, Mishawaka, Indiana. He was the preacher boy of the year when he was 17 years old for Youth for Christ nationally. I mean, he was a silver tongued orator. I mean, he was the guy that I thought "here's got to be the next Billy Graham."

The minute I heard him, I mean, he was just amazing speaker. But at age 24, it just happens at age 24, he walked out on his wife and three children. Has never had a Christian ministry since. Last time I heard he was raising funds over in

Europe for some stadiums or something, soccer stadiums or something. I'm saying the mentor, that's where I came up with a concept that on the mountain of life alone, without someone to hang on to you, when your life falls apart or is about to, you're about to do something really stupid is one of the critical roles for a mentor to play in life.

Dr. James Dobson: Alright, Bobb. There's somebody listening to us right now is hanging on the side of the mountain. I mean, they are going to slide down and they don't have anybody that they can call. There's no one to walk in and say, "Sit down." There's no one that they trust. No one committed to them.

Bobb Biehl: That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: Where do they find it?

Bobb Biehl: I would say what you want to do is ask yourself this question. Who are the one or maybe two or maybe three people that you like a lot that have more experience than you do, they're more mature than you, they've been married longer than you have. You have some access to them, but you've never really gotten to know them real well. Ask them today if you can have a cup of coffee, lunch, something, and just get to know them a little bit. And then if that works well, it's sort of like a first date. If they seem open to you, they seem to like you as much as you like them, sort of get along, then ask them, "Would you ever consider being one of my life mentors?" And when they say, "What do you mean by that?" Because you can mean a thousand things to say, "I've got a little booklet here. I've got a book here. I'd like to have you read it. I've read it. I'd like to have you read it. And then let's get back together a week or two from now and then let's discuss what we really mean by that."

Chris Fabry: I want to go back to the story because some people could think that mentoring is simply all encouragement. You mentioned Barnabas last time. He was the son of encouragement. It sounds like a mentor, if you allow a mentor in your life, you kind of open yourself up to this other person. If it's a man, another man, a woman, another woman, you give them permission to say some hard things as well as the encouraging things. You give him permission to say, "Sit down."

Bobb Biehl: I think that's exactly right. And what I would say also is that the more you get to know each other, the more that trust builds and lowers the barriers, the more open you are to constructive criticism as compared to mutual admiration. Encouragement like that. I was talking with a client this morning on the phone and he said to me, I mean, this is a client of mine. When people ask me, "What do you do?" I say, "I'm an executive mentor because I basically help people know how to grow companies. That's what I do."

Dr. James Dobson: Or Ministries.

Bobb Biehl: Or ministries, company organizations. It can be a church or a nonprofit organization or for profit company or a government agency, but I help people know how to grow organizations, how to sort out direction, get the right team in place, get the money in place, those kind of things. He, because of our maturing relationship said, "Bobb, do you mind if I share something with you that I think is hurting you?" This was this morning on the phone. And he told me something that I had done that he said, "Bobb, you shouldn't be doing that. That's hurting you." And I thanked him for it. In other words, when there's a mutual trust relationship, I'm happy to have him speak into my life, sit down kind of things. I'm happy to speak into his life, sit down kind of things. So it's a mutual relationship that builds trust over time that really tends to be that safety rope on the mountain of life. It's very powerful.

Dr. James Dobson: I would guess he had earned the right to say that to you.

Bobb Biehl: Absolutely. And we've had a growing relationship of trust over four years now. I've helped him acquire companies. I've helped him hire and fire people. I've helped him do a lot of things and he's helped me see things as well.

Dr. James Dobson: Have I heard you correctly that the initiation of a mentoring relationship can go either way?

Bobb Biehl: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: The mentor can say, "Let's have a cup of coffee and sit down and begin to get acquainted." Or the... Is it the mentee?

Bobb Biehl: The protege can. I call it the protege.

Dr. James Dobson: The protege.

Bobb Biehl: The protege can. Ideally, the mentor approaches the protege. The reason is because the mentor is giving a lot. So the mentor should approach the protege ideally and say, "I would like to offer to become one of your life mentors." But if you're the protege and no mentors are coming around, don't hesitate, initiate. Go to them and say, "Would you consider the possibility of being one of my life mentors?"

Chris Fabry: Can anyone be a mentor? Do you have to be perfect? Do you have to have scored a certain amount on your ACT or SAT?

Bobb Biehl: That's a great question. I can answer that best by telling you one simple story. It's a story called George Kaywood. And George has given me permission to share this with anyone I want to, so it's not telling tales out of school. George Kaywood, I met him when he was the executive director of the Union Rescue Mission in downtown Los Angeles, and he was a client of mine. I consulted with him for a number of years. And he told me this story. When he was 15 years old,

he came home from school and his father committed suicide. It turned out it was even George's gun and they didn't have help, so George and his mother had to clean up the house afterwards. You can imagine the trauma it is to a 15 year old boy. And every time ... George is a man that probably knows more scripture than almost anyone I know. He can quote massive amounts of Scripture. He speaks a lot. He's just a godly gifted man. But whenever you mention the word church to George, you see the muscles on his jaw sort of tighten up. And having observed that, I said, "George, when your father committed suicide, were you going to church at that time?" He said, "Yeah, we were actively involved in a little church in San Diego area." I said, "How did the men of the church react to you?" He said, "They never said one word to me." And you could tell it was very emotional for him. I said, "George, you do know as an adult, the men didn't know what to say." It wasn't they didn't care; they just didn't know how to say it.

They didn't know how to approach a boy 15 years old. They didn't know what to say, so they just said nothing. He said, "As an adult, I understand that. As a boy, I did not." I said, "George, what do you wish the men of the church had approached you with at that time?" He said, "I just wish someone would have told me I was going to be okay and that they believed in me or something, or just ask how I was doing."

And I said, "George, how smart would the person have had to be to ... " Your question, Chris, what kind of SAT scores would he have had to have? He said, "He could have been a flunk out from the first grade." I said, "What kind of position would he have had to have?" He said, "He could have been a homeless person, just sort of dropped by the church." The only criteria that would have made any difference at all to me was, did he care for me? Did he care whether I lived or died? I don't know if you knew this, but Abraham Lincoln's inaugural. Lincoln was what, 6'6" and had a stovepipe hat, got him up over seven feet tall. There was a guy that was four feet tall in the front row with a little stove pipe hat, and all the people didn't know who he was.

"Who is that guy up there with Abraham Lincoln's inaugural?" Nobody knew who he was. You know who it was? It was his mentor. He was the guy that stood with him when he lost his governor. He lost everything, and he was four feet tall. And he came to him. His name was Mentor Graham. It just happened his name was mentor. He believed in Abraham Lincoln. He said, "Abe, hang in there. You can do it. Here's the next step. Here, go from here." And when he became president, but here's the kicker. Today in the fourth grade, I'd ask, let's say for example, if I were talking to a lay person, I'd say, "Tell me something. How comfortable would you be mentoring the governor of the state today?" Oh, I wouldn't even know what to say to him. I said, "What if you knew that the future governor of your state or the future president of the United States was in your fourth grade Sunday school class today?" "Oh, I could talk to him."

I say, "You don't know. You don't know. Now, consider this. I was speaking at a conference over in Vienna with Campus Crusade and I talked on mentoring and

afterwards, a 65 year old lady came up and said, "This talk changed my life." I thought," Changed your life. Isn't that sort of an overstatement? I mean, it couldn't have been that high impact." I said, but instead of saying something sort of silly like that, I said," How? What was so meaningful to you?" She said," Bobb, I've been a teacher, like a fourth grade teacher at the embassy, sort of an American school in a foreign country kind of thing. "And she said," In my classroom, I've had sheiks, shahs, princes, all that kind of thing. "And she said," But when they hit the head graduation from my class, I thought I'm done with them now. "But she said," When I look back, I think, what would have happened if out of each class of 30, 40 kids, I'd have taken the one kid that I had a natural heart to connect with and just corresponded him like Dr. Harwood did with you, Jim.

Just think if I'd have taken one person per class over a 40 year period, I would have still access of influence and encouragement to 40 heads of states around the world today. "And she said," I just feel ... "It just changed my life. She said," Frankly, I've retired now and I'm not going to have that chance." But she said," I'm going to take each of my grandchildren and I'm just going to be their best encourager and the sounding board, et cetera." Now, it's just a few stories, but mentoring is such an incredibly powerful thing.

Dr. James Dobson: Bobb, most of your illustrations and what we've talked about last time and this one have been in the context of an adult with an adult, a younger adult, perhaps with an older adult. I want to talk about the age factor in a minute, but we had a guest who's very familiar to all of us named Stu Epperson. He and Ed Atsinger owned the Salem Radio Network and they've been friends of ours for years, but he has a ministry called One Kid at a Time where he's talking about mentoring these inner city kids. They're desperate. There are many of them from foster care situations where they've been bounced from pillar to post. There's no one that has made a commitment to them in their entire lives. They have no real substantial friendships and they're lost. They're absolutely lost. And this is the heart's cry of Stu's ministry to provide mentors to reach out to those kids. Now, would you use mentoring in that context? Does that word apply that?

Bob Biehl: I'd be very careful to use it. I would love to use it, but I'd be very careful to, for this reason. Let's say if Stu came and asked me, Bobb, how do we maximize mentoring in this setting? I would say, first of all, make sure that there's a natural chemistry between the person, the child and the adult. Don't assign people. Just make sure there's a natural chemistry there where you can see a kid, and it could be a kid that you think has enormous leadership potential like a future president, and it could be a kid that you think won't make it unless someone cares, either way. But if you have a kid that you say," Lord, bond my heart to this kid for a lifetime. "Think of the difference that would make as compared to six months and I'm out of here. I'm saying anything we can do to lengthen the amount of time when we have a relationship with a child like that, it just gets better and better.

Dr. James Dobson: All right. Going back to what we were talking about before, and Chris, back to your question, the person who's being asked to mentor, I think, often says, "I'm not qualified. I really can't handle this. I don't have anything that I can do to help you." Address that.

Bob Biehl: Well, first of all, often they feel like I'm supposed to be this genius of some kind that's like a concert pianist teaching a 16 year old protege how to play the piano. That's not it at all. The question is one of experience and caring. If you care for a person and have more experience than they do in some area, you've got all the qualifications you need to be their mentor.

Dr. James Dobson: Can a parent mentor a child?

Bob Biehl: I say no. A parent is supposed to be a parent. Actually, the parent sets the child's agenda. Here's what you're supposed to learn. You're not supposed to do drugs. You're not supposed to do this. You're supposed to go to Sunday school or whatever. The parent basically has an agenda for that child, is supposed to have. It wouldn't be appropriate for the parent to come to a six year old and say, "What are your plans and how can I help?" But as you know with older children, I don't know about you Chris, but with like Danae and Ryan and Jay and Kimberly, the older they get, the more it morphs into more of a mentoring relationship where when they get to be late teenagers, your relationship better have become more of a mentoring relationship. You're still the parent, but it's a higher blend of what are your plans and how can I help? So when your child gets to be an adult, I think that's ... You're still the parent, but it's a high percentage of that, what I call mentor's attitude.

Dr. James Dobson: What about a couple mentoring another couple?

Bob Biehl: This is incredibly important from my perspective because ... And fortunately, a lot of churches are picking up on this and getting couples who want to mentor young couples and it's just great. A lot of young couples have never seen a healthy marriage. They come from broken homes, broken marriages. They've never seen a healthy, loving relationship. And it isn't just reading about it that's important. It's seeing it and experiencing it, smelling it, tasting it, touching it. And when a mentor couple can come along that has a mature marriage, invite this young couple into their home, watch how they do things, it's so much better.

Chris Fabry: People in today's society, I think, are so wrapped up with what their own agenda is and they have these blinders on and I'm going for this and that.

Bob Biehl: A lot of people are.

Chris Fabry: You've really got to look outside of that and to reach into somebody else's life.

Bobb Biehl: I say anyone can be a mentor like the George Kaywood story, but not everyone should be. And the reason they should not be is that at certain times of life, we've got so dang much stuff going on that we really don't have anything left to give anyone. At that time, may not be the phase of your life when you've got any energy left to be a mentor.

Chris Fabry: So I don't need to feel guilty for that.

Bobb Biehl: So do not feel guilty if now is not the time you're supposed to be mentoring someone. But if you've been saying, "How can I make a significant difference? How can I work in the lives? I don't have a Ph.D., in family psychology or something." Take one couple you really believe in and come along beside them. And even though they move 15 times the next 10 years as they get promoted, keep calling them saying, "How are you doing? What are your plans? Any way I can be helpful? "That someone cares whether you live or die is fundamental.

Dr. James Dobson: Bobb, let's suppose here in closing that you're talking to some pastors and you probably are, who have caught the vision today and last time, and they see that there ought to be more mentoring going on in his or her church. Where do they start?

Bobb Biehl: This is going to sound self-serving. I'd start with the book so that the pastor can read through it and get sort of the definitions clear so he knows what he's talking about when he introduces a subject. Then we also have a video with it. He could show the video, which he may not feel like I'm the expert to introduce it, but could say if there's anyone in the church interested in being a mentor or being a protege, come and watch the video. Watch the video, then discuss it. Then we have little booklets you give out. You don't have to give a book to everyone, but it's like there are tools available is what I'm saying. The other thing is, every mentor needs someone building into their life. We have a website called quickwisdom.com that's free. And it's where each month I do two or three things that basically try to help people who are trying to be mentors or trying to be leaders, just keep building into their life over 30, 40 years, hopefully. I'm not their mentor, but it's a mentoring attitude of here's something I think will help you win.

Dr. James Dobson: Thank you, Bobb. It's been all these years since we talked about this subject. It's still of interest to me and still important.

Bobb Biehl: It's still extremely significant subject.

Roger Marsh: Some of the greatest gifts we can offer to others cost us nothing but time and attention, and yet their impact can last for generations. On today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, we featured a classic conversation Dr. Dobson had with Bobb Biehl about the power of mentoring. If you missed any portion of today's broadcast, or if you'd like to go back and listen to part one, you'll find both installments on our website, jdfi.net. Once you're there, you'll also find

information about Bobb Biehl's book, *Mentoring: How to Find a Mentor, and How to Become One*. Again, all that information is waiting for you at jdfi.net.

And speaking of relationships that matter, I want to tell you about a free digital resource we've prepared for you called "The Undeniable Differences Between Husbands and Wives." Drawing from Dr. Dobson's decades of experience and research, this practical guide explores how men and women are uniquely designed by God and how understanding these differences can actually strengthen your marriage. So whether you're a newlywed or you're celebrating your golden wedding anniversary, you'll discover fresh insights that can help you appreciate your spouse in deeper ways. You can request your free download of the undeniable differences between husbands and wives when you go to jdfi.net.

Through daily broadcasts like the one you just heard, the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute works to strengthen marriages and families all across America. We are committed to promoting biblical principles that support healthy relationships and child development, introducing people to the gospel of Jesus Christ and defending the sanctity of human life and religious freedom, but we can only continue this work with partners just like you. Would you partner with us today with a donation? Your gift of any amount helps us reach millions of families with biblical truth and practical guidance that they can't find anywhere else. To make a secure donation, visit jdfi.net. If you'd prefer, you can send your tax-deductible contribution through the US Postal Service. Our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code, 80949. Or call a member of our constituent care team when you dial 877-732-6825.

I'm Roger Marsh, and from all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you can still trust for the family you love.

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