



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Perilous Fight

Guest(s): Dr. Ben Carson

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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: Hello and welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. We often think of battles between good and evil as something that only happened in superhero movies. But the truth is, we are all facing these battles in our daily lives, in our marriages, our families, and our communities, and the stakes couldn't be much higher.

Today here on Family Talk, we'll be tackling these cultural challenges head on with a very special guest. His name is Dr. Ben Carson and he recently released a powerful new book called *The Perilous Fight* that speaks directly to the struggles facing American families today.

The program you're about to hear is included in our 2024 Best of Broadcast Collection, and you can find that online at drjamesdobson.org. We'll tell you at the end of the program how you can reserve your own six-CD set of this Best of Broadcast Collection as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in support of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

And now, let's dive into this important conversation featuring Dr. James Dobson and his guest, Dr. Ben Carson, here on Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello, everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk. And it's a great honor for me to have as our guest today, one of my good friends, I wish I could spend more time with him, Dr. Ben Carson, who served as the director of pediatric neurosurgery, making him the youngest major division director in the hospital history.

And he performed the first only successful separation of craniopagus and that was in 1987 and the story goes on from there. He's also the author of 13 best-selling books and has just now published a brand new one and we're going to talk about it today. The title of it is *The Perilous Fight: Overcoming the Culture War on the American Family*. And that's a subject that I care deeply about and the book is wonderful and I hope you'll come to know it and will read it, too.

He's joining us remotely today and I'm delighted to have the opportunity to talk to him, not only about this book but about other things. Let me take you back, Dr. Carson, to that surgery. How did it come to be that you did the first such surgery at that age. 33 years of age, is that what I understand?

Dr. Ben Carson: Yes.

Dr. James Dobson: How did that come about?

Dr. Ben Carson: It's very interesting. I had gotten very interested in the whole subject of craniopagus twins. And I was wondering why it was that so many of them died during the attempt at separation. And I did some investigation and discovered that it was primarily exsanguination or bleeding to death. And I was thinking when we got to the critical part of a craniopagus separation, instead of facing what all surgeons have faced before, which is massive bleeding, we could pump all the blood out of the body and then reconstruct the blood vessels and then pump the blood back in.

And literally about three weeks later, we got the call about these twins in Germany and they had been searching all over the world for anybody who might have an idea of how they could be separated. And I explained what I had been thinking about and we put together a team at Hopkins and everybody said, "That sounds like it would work." And that's how it got on the docket.

Dr. James Dobson: When did you retire?

Dr. Ben Carson: I retired in 2013. I had specifically determined when I was going to retire because someone told me that neurosurgeons die early and I didn't believe it. So, I wrote down the name of the last 10 that I knew who died, calculated the average age of death, and it was 61. So, I was determined that when I turned 61, I would retire and I did. But I didn't stay retired very long. I failed retirement.

Dr. James Dobson: And did what?

Dr. Ben Carson: And that's when I entered the political arena, ran for president and ended up as the Secretary of Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Dr. James Dobson: As in the Trump administration?

Dr. Ben Carson: Yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: How did you find that? Was that difficult or was this something you enjoyed?

Dr. Ben Carson: It was difficult at the beginning because the Democrats were playing hardball. They didn't want to give me any of my people. So, it was five months before I had any assistant secretaries and eight months before I had a deputy secretary.

So, every day was like drinking from the fire hydrant and couple that with the fact that the fiscal situation at HUD was a disaster.

They had not had an audit, a federally required audit in eight years. They're required to have an audit every year. You couldn't do an audit because there were so many material defects. So, we managed to convince a senior partner at Ernst & Young to come. It took a lot of arm twisting. But he finally came. He said, "Ernst & Young would never have taken this department on as a client."

But he put together a team and they got it straightened out. HUD's probably the best-run agency in Washington now. And once we got the right people in place, we were able to get an enormous amount of stuff accomplished. It made a really big difference.

Dr. James Dobson: How'd you find working for government after being in a medical setting?

Dr. Ben Carson: It was okay. It was frustrating sometimes dealing with some of the political characters who really didn't necessarily want people to get out of poverty and be self-sufficient, because that's their power base. So, they're not that interested in helping with things like that.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you think you'll try it again?

Dr. Ben Carson: I will do whatever the good Lord wants me to do. I'm committed to using whatever gifts and talents and opportunities he's presented to me to help save this country.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, we want to talk about your book today. But before we do that, again, I'd like to go back to your childhood. Your mother was quite a lady. Tell us about her.

Dr. Ben Carson: She was an amazing person, probably the wisest person I ever knew. I always say if everybody had my mother, we wouldn't have any problems.

Dr. James Dobson: What made her such a good mom?

Dr. Ben Carson: Well, she was born to a very large family in rural Tennessee, bounced around from house to house, never really had a stable place to live, achieved less than a 3rd grade education and got married at age 13, trying to escape all of this poverty and blithe and they moved to Detroit. And some years later she discovered that my father was a bigamist. He was a part-time preacher and a factory worker and a bigamist.

So, obviously, that resulted in a divorce. And there she was with the task of raising two young sons in the inner city by herself. But she was a person with great faith in God and she absolutely refused to be a victim no matter what was going on.

Dr. James Dobson: How did she come to know the Lord like that?

Dr. Ben Carson: She met a Christian woman when she was in the hospital having had a suicide attempt. And fortunately, it wasn't successful. And she met this woman who started telling her about the Lord. And she accepted fully and it changed her life.

Dr. James Dobson: She saw to it that you all came to know Lord?

Dr. Ben Carson: Absolutely. She was always talking about the Lord and she couldn't really read, but she struggled to try to teach herself how to read because she wanted to read the Bible and she wanted to read books about Jesus. And she absolutely refused to be a victim no matter what was ... If anybody was a victim, it was her. But no, she absolutely refused to be a victim and she wouldn't let us be victims.

Dr. James Dobson: What I remember most about your previous visit here was that you were not doing well in school. You were fooling around and not paying attention to what.

Dr. Ben Carson: I was a horrible, horrible student, probably the worst you have ever seen. And all the kids used to tease me and call me names and they all thought I was stupid. The teachers thought I was stupid. The only person who didn't think I was stupid was my mother. And she was always saying, "Benjamin, you're much too smart when you bring home grades like this." I brought them home anyway. But she always had something encouraging to say.

And it was her faith that made her go to the Lord and say, "You got to show me what to do, but I don't know what to do and I don't want my boys to end up like me. They need to be educated." And God gave her the wisdom. He gave her the wisdom to look around because she was working as a domestic. She was cleaning people's houses. She would leave at 5:00 in the morning and get back at midnight going from house to house to house because she didn't want to be on welfare.

And she opened her eyes and she said, "These people who live in these fine houses, they don't seem to watch a lot of TV and they seem to read a lot of books." So, she came home and imposed that on me and my brother. And we were not happy campers, I got to tell you. In today's world, we probably would've called social services. But we had to read the books and I didn't like it very much.

But after a while I actually began to enjoy reading those books, because we were very poor. But between the covers of those books, I could escape poverty, I could go anywhere in the world, I could be anybody, I could do anything. I started reading about entrepreneurs and surgeons and scientists and philosophers. And it dawned on me and each one of their cases that the person who has the most to do with what happens to you is you. It's not somebody else. It's not some circumstance.

And I stopped listening to all the negative people around me who were saying, "You can't do this. You can't do that. The society is stacked against you." I just threw all that stuff in the garbage, start thinking about what I could do. And my mother was being severely criticized by her friends. They were saying, "You can't make boys stay in the house and read the books. They'll grow up and they'll hate you."

But I think she had the last laugh because one son became a brain surgeon and the other became a rocket scientist. So, maybe she knew what she was talking about.

Dr. James Dobson: She would not settle for you're doing poorly in school, she really insisted that you study.

Dr. Ben Carson: And she did succeed in teaching herself to read. She got her GED.

Dr. James Dobson: And that's the amazing thing is that she wanted you to read, but she couldn't even read herself.

Dr. Ben Carson: That's right. She couldn't read the reports that she made us do. But she got her GED. She went on to college. And in 1994, she got an honorary doctor degree. So, she was Dr. Carson, too.

Dr. James Dobson: What a story. Was she able to help you with your lessons or did she just insist that you do it?

Dr. Ben Carson: She could help us when it came to wisdom, how to think about things. Obviously, she couldn't read or interpret any of this stuff. But she had very good common sense. And I'd rather see a person with common sense any day than somebody with a bunch of Ph.D.'s who's a fool.

Dr. James Dobson: How'd you feel about your dad leaving you?

Dr. Ben Carson: I was devastated and I prayed every night that they would get back together. And as a young child, I couldn't understand why God didn't answer my prayer. But later in life, I fully understood it, because my father was into drugs and gambling and women. Women are okay, but you only need one. And that would've been a really bad influence on me. So, God knew exactly what he was doing.

Dr. James Dobson: How did you get into medical school?

Dr. Ben Carson: Well, by the time I finished high school, I was a top achieving student. Did very well on the SATs and won a scholarship to Yale. And after a slow start at Yale, because I was used to easy inner city high school, go from there to a high-powered Ivy League school was a real shock to my system and I really had to learn how to study.

But once I learned how to study, it came to me pretty well. And I got into medical school and I thought that that was the last hurdle because I wanted to be a doctor since I was eight years old and I was finally in medical school. I said, "The last hurdle has been completed. I'm going to make it." And then I did so terribly on the first set of comprehensive exams that my counselor encouraged me to drop out of medical school.

He said, "You're not cut out to be a doctor. You're just going to torment yourself and everybody else, and we can help you get into another discipline. It's not too late." I was devastated and I just went back to my apartment and I prayed to God to show me the way. Because I said, "I'm sure you want me to be a doctor, but this is not working."

And then I started thinking, I said, "What kind of courses have you always done well in?" And I realized I did well on courses where I did a lot of reading. And I said, "What kind of courses have you struggled in?" And I realized that I struggled in courses where I listened to a lot of boring lectures, because I don't get anything out of boring lectures, absolutely nothing, zero.

And I was sitting in six hours' worth of them every day. So, I made the executive decision to skip the boring lectures and to spend that time reading. And the rest of medical school was a snap after that. And years later when I came back to my medical school as the commencement speaker, I was looking for that counselor because I was going to tell him he wasn't cut out to be a counselor.

Because some people who are just so negative, negative, negative, they can always find a reason you can't do something. What if they spent that energy trying to figure out how you could do it?

Dr. James Dobson: That's an unbelievable story. And from there on, you did well in medical school?

Dr. Ben Carson: I did well in medical school and I just had an affinity for neurosurgery. I thought when I entered medical school that I was going to be a psychiatrist. I had no interest in surgery, whatsoever. But as I listened to some of the lectures of the neurosurgeons, I just taken by it. It just fascinated me. And I started moving in that direction. People discouraged me. At that time, there had only been eight black neurosurgeons in the world.

Dr. James Dobson: Are you serious? Is that really true?

Dr. Ben Carson: Yeah. Absolutely. But God doesn't distribute talent based on race. And He gave me just an innate sense of neurosurgery and what to do, and I excelled in those rotations. And that's how I ended up at Johns Hopkins. They only took two people a year out of 125 applicants.

Dr. James Dobson: Was your mother proud of you?

Dr. Ben Carson: Well, people would always say to her, "You must be really proud of your son." And she would always say, "I really am. And I'm proud of Benjamin, too," because my brother did well, too.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, that's an incredible story. And you shared it with me. You were part of it when you were here before and we didn't get a chance to ask for the details.

Dr. Ben Carson: Well, one of the most gratifying parts of my life was to be able to make her last years very comfortable.

Dr. James Dobson: How long has she been gone?

Dr. Ben Carson: She died in 2017, so seven years ago.

Dr. James Dobson: Did she know what you accomplished?

Dr. Ben Carson: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. She got to travel all over the world and the accolades, people just loved her. She got to see it all. And she lived with us for the last 20 years.

Dr. James Dobson: Did you ever reconcile with your father?

Dr. Ben Carson: Well, the last time I saw him was the day I got married. He did come to the wedding. But we never had a close relationship.

Dr. James Dobson: I'm interested in the title of your book, *The Perilous Fight: Overcoming Our Culture's War on the American Family*.

Dr. Ben Carson: Well, the reason I call it *The Perilous Fight* is because this country was born in the crucible of conflict. We weren't given our freedom. We had to fight for it. Not only during the Revolutionary War, but during the War of 1812 when we almost got recaptured by Great Britain. And we're at a precipice like that currently, also.

Which way are we going to go as a country? Are we going to be a country that's about the people and that's about our faith and about our sense of community and togetherness? Or are we going to allow ourselves to be manipulated into thinking that we're enemies and rip ourselves apart?

Dr. James Dobson: That's why you call it a culture war?

Dr. Ben Carson: Definitely a culture war. Our faith and our families are the basis of our identity. And what do Marxists always do? They dumb down the population. Because people who are dumbed down are much easier to manipulate. And you've probably noticed on the television when they have those men on the street interviews and they ask people the simplest questions, "Who was the first president? What country's border America? How many branches of government are there? How many Supreme Court?" They have no idea. They have no clue.

Dr. James Dobson: I've watched those programs and I've seen other people laugh. It is not a laughing matter to me.

Dr. Ben Carson: No.

Dr. James Dobson: It's serious and it's disaster.

Dr. Ben Carson: It's very serious. And it's the precursor to manipulation and domination. And it always occurs before countries become socialist and communist. And that's why I put so much emphasis on education upon true education, not upon learning about critical race theory and what pronouns you should use. I'm talking about American history, world history, mathematics, science, being able to express yourself appropriately, having perspective on what's gone on in the world, true education.

And if you really want to be impressed, there was a time when we really, in this country, emphasized education. I think it had a lot to do with our success. Go back and look at a 6th grade exit exam from 150 to 200 years ago. It will blow your mind. And people today just don't know that stuff anymore.

Dr. James Dobson: How did your mother keep you from being wounded and destroyed by racism?

Dr. Ben Carson: Well, she always emphasized that people are people. And she never bought into the concept that this group of people is bad, and this group of people is good. Individuals in different groups are good and bad, but not the whole groups.

Dr. James Dobson: Was she angry about what the culture tried to do to her and her children?

Dr. Ben Carson: Not really. I mean, she was not naive. She understood what was going on. I remember when we went to Tennessee when I was 6 years old, and they were whites only and color only signs up. She made sure that we understood what that meant, said, "It won't be like that when you go back to Detroit." We always talked about them, made sure that we understood them. And that way you stay out of trouble, navigate your way, and you can be a light fixture wherever you go.

Did we run into people who were racist? Absolutely, we did. But how do you treat those people? And we found that when you treat those people with respect and kindness, it has a profound ameliorating effect on them. I remember at one point, this is after I was an adult, grew up had a family. We bought a farm in the rural area of Maryland that was known for Ku Klux Klan rallies and things like that.

And in fact, one of the neighbors immediately put up a Confederate flag when we moved in and all the other neighbors put up American flags and he took it down. And we were very gracious and kind to them. They subsequently became friends of ours.

Dr. James Dobson: That's the bottom line of your book, isn't it?

Dr. Ben Carson: That's what it's all about. Know what's going on. Don't go into this with your eyes closed and then wake up surprised and say, "Oh, how did this happen?" It's happening right before our eyes and we all can play a part in reversing the downfall.

Dr. James Dobson: Dr. Carson, thank you for being our guest today. I appreciate so much what you are doing in the cause of Christ. And it is just a great honor to have you here, as I said at the beginning of the program.

Dr. Ben Carson: Well, thank you for having me. And as I said during the program, your writings were a big part of my kids growing up. They've all turned out to be very successful. And I want to thank you for that. Always inspired after talking to you.

Roger Marsh: And that concludes Dr. James Dobson's powerful conversation with Dr. Ben Carson today here on Family Talk. They were discussing Dr. Carson's new book called *The Perilous Fight*. And you can learn more about that resource and Dr. Carson's ministry when you visit our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

Well, this conversation was so impactful. We've also included it in our 2024 Best of Broadcast Collection. And right now, we'll be happy to send you that six-CD set or provide the digital download as our way of thanking you for your gift of any amount in support of the ministry of Family Talk.

And here's even better news, all throughout the month of December, your gift will go twice as far, thanks to some generous friends of the ministry. Every dollar you donate will be doubled through our special matching grant now through December 31st. To make your over the phone call, 877-732-6825. You can also give a gift online when you go to drjamesdobson.org.

And while you're visiting our online resource center, on the landing page, make sure you also check out the brand new 12-day advent series courtesy of Dr. Dobson, Dr. Owen Strachan, and the Dobson Culture Center. You can sign up to start receiving those readings and also the videos that go along with them when you go to drjamesdobson.org.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for listening to Family Talk today. Be sure to join us again next time for another edition of our Best of Broadcast Collection right here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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