



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Memories of Ronald Reagan

**Guest(s):** Dr. James Dobson

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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 Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and today we're sharing a very special moment from our archives.

Today is February the 6th, 2025. It marks the 114th anniversary of the birth of Ronald Reagan. And on today's program, we're going to take you back to an evening in 2009 when our own Dr. James Dobson received the prestigious Ronald Reagan Lifetime Achievement Award from the Council for National Policy.

Now, at that time, only seven people had received this honor in the organization's then 28-year history. After accepting the award, Dr. Dobson shared some remarkable personal memories of his time with President Reagan during the 1980s. From an unforgettable adventure at Reagan's Inaugural Ball to meaningful conversations in the Cabinet Room, these stories give us a unique glimpse into the special connection between these two champions of faith and family.

Now, as we begin the presentation, you're going to hear Dr. Dobson reflecting on the political climate that led to Reagan's presidency and the inspiring ways this remarkable leader helped restore America's foundation of faith, family, and freedom. Here's Dr. James Dobson now to begin this special edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: In 1966, and matter of fact, it was April 6th, 1966, *Time* Magazine on its cover asked the question: Is God dead? That went to the core of the Judeo-Christian ethic and questioned the very existence of God. It had an enormous impact and it sold more copies than any other Time Magazine on the newsstand for 20 years. It was just unbelievably influential.

Anybody remember the name of the man who wrote the article? His name was John T. Elson. And it just so happens that John T. Elson died three weeks ago on September the 7th of this year, and God is still alive.

Well, that brings us to 1980. And an absolutely wonderful thing happened that you know about, a cowboy with R.R. on his boots rode into town, a new sheriff, and he had a shootout at the OK Corral with Jimmy Carter. And when it was all over, he had 489 electoral votes, and Jimmy Carter had 49 and Reagan had won 44.

It was a phenomenal thing. I've never been so ecstatic in my life. All of the frustrations that I had had through the '70s had come to that moment. And here came a man who had the courage and the conviction to talk about family. Nobody in government talked about family and no one talked about the sanctity of human life, and no one stood up for conservative values and principles, and it was thrilling to me. And somebody in the Reagan team, I don't know who it was, sent me 10 tickets to the Inaugural Ball on January 20th, 1981.

And I was thrilled to get them. Shirley and I invited four couples to join us. And so the 10 of us went to the inauguration. Nobody knew who I was. I was just in the crowd. I was standing. Shirley and I were standing there with our friends on the west side of the Capitol building when the president took the oath of office. It was a thrilling day. And we were standing by the road when the presidential motorcade came by and all that.

Then came the Inaugural Ball. There were nine of them, and we were jammed into the Smithsonian American History Museum. We were shoulder to shoulder in there, and as it turned out that Reagan's went to nine of these balls, and ours was last. So we stood there from about 6:30 in the afternoon till 10 till midnight, and we had heard that Reagan would be coming soon, and I just wanted to catch a glimpse of him. And so at about 10 minutes to 12, I turned to my friend Jim Davis, who's six foot five, I'm six two, and I said, "Jim, we better go get our coats 'cause once Reagan gets here and leaves, there's going to be a mad dash for coats."

So we went over to get our coats and we put them over our arm and we were coming back and the doors swung open and in came the Secret Service. They had to be 15 of these guys, and they were all big, and they were all wearing tuxes like we were. And they went running into a stairwell. I looked at Jim, he looked at me. We said, "Why not?" We ran into this area. We ran with them up the stairs. And Secret Service looks ahead. They don't look behind. And even if they had, we looked like them.

And we went up one floor and came at a door. I walked straight into Ronald Reagan. He was three feet away from me. And I knew I shouldn't be there. And I'm looking at Jim and, "What have we done?" And then about that time, they announced Ronald and Nancy Reagan to come to the platform. There was this big room, much bigger than this one. There had to be at least several thousand people there that were all standing. And there were these blue uniformed police who had cordoned off a pathway to the platform for him to walk down the two of them. And he took off down there and we said, "Why not?"

We followed him. I'm telling you the honest truth. We walked with the president down that ... It was the craziest thing I've ever done in my life. It's a wonder I didn't get shot I mean. And we walked all the way to the platform and the Reagans went on up. I looked at Jim, he looked at me and we said, "No." We stood down there like that. We were right here in that pathway and there were Secret Service looking out. Now for the first time they looked behind and this Secret Service man over here saw us and scared him to death. And he came tearing down there because see, he didn't know what's under those coats. It was flat out dumb, folks, but it was the most exciting moment of my life.

And he came down and he shoved us and said, "Get out of here." And we did, and we walked back. And when we got back to the end of this cordoned off area and we opened our coats. We showed him what was on our arm, and we said, "Look, we're clean. We just want to say hello to him." And unbelievably, he allowed us to stay there. And Ronald Reagan and Nancy came and walked up that corridor and came right to us, but turned left instead of right. So I didn't get a chance to shake his hand, but it was unbelievable that we were even in the room with him, much less having that encounter.

And would you believe that three years later, I was sitting in a cabinet room next to Ronald Reagan with just jelly beans between us talking to him about the institution of the family and making recommendations for how they could strengthen it. And I made four recommendations that day, and I'm not going to bore you with all of them. One of them, however, was I made reference to the Environmental Impact Report at that time.

Before you could build anything or buy any land or change anything, you had to get an environmental impact. You still do, right? I ask why should there not be a family impact report? Before Congress does anything, there ought to be a study made of what this will do to the family. And the president liked that idea, and he issued it as an executive order and it stayed in effect until Bill Clinton abrogated it in the '90s. But it was a very special time.

Attorney General Meese has already told you that I was on a lot of commissions and things that took place at that time, and we really enjoyed. I got to know the President somewhat and respected him. He really did have a passion for family and for life. And if I had time, I could tell you of tears running down his face when we talked about babies who were born with Down Syndrome or with other disabilities, and they would hang a sign on the crib that said: Do not feed. That touched the President deeply, and he did what he could. He didn't have the votes to really implement an anti-abortion policy, but he wanted to. And I saw his heart. And we had some wonderful days at that time. It's my night, so I'm going to tell you another story, okay?

In 1985, we were invited to a state dinner, and that is truly a Cinderella night, and we had never been to one before. And so we went to Washington and then it hit me. You don't go to the White House in a cab. That just isn't what you do. So I called my assistant in California and I said, "You got to get us a limousine."

She didn't know one limousine from the other, and she got about a 200-foot limousine. It was I couldn't even see Shirley on the other end of it. And we drove up to the White House and around to the Portico, and Jack Woodward was a Secret Service man that time, and he was standing inside the portico and he said, "I saw this thing coming and it just kept coming. And I wondered if this is a national sovereign from somewhere. And Jim and Shirley stepped out."

And a Marine came with his white gloves and gave Shirley his arm, and I followed him. We went into the White House down by the Rose Garden, that long corridor. And there is a place you've been there when it jogs like that. And right in that corner is where they put the press for the photo ops. And when you came up to that point, the Marine would announce you. And so in front of us was Sylvester Stallone and Raquel Welch wearing a white dress that I'll never forget. Believe me.

There was Michael J. Fox and there was Natalie Cole. And when each one was identified, there's all these flashes, the whole area lit up, clickety, click, click, click, click. They came to Shirley me and he said, "Dr. and Mrs. James Dobson." Dead silence. I think there's one guy with a disposable camera. I was not who they had in mind. It was quite a day. And those were wonderful years.

And I just not only appreciated about Ronald Reagan the things that I have told you, but the values that he represented, the smaller government and fewer taxes and free enterprise and the other conservative perspectives that he put into place, including family. And he did make room for that.

Then we came to the very end of, oh, I served as co-chairman of his Citizens for Tax Reform, and we were able to get included in that bill, the deduction for children to go from 600 to \$1,000 to \$2,000 to give relief to families. And I consider that one of our accomplishments that I'm most proud of.

Well, it came to the end of his second term, and the very last public event that he had was a bill to limit pornography. And I was there, and it was a very nostalgic time because he was saying goodbye to his staff, and Nancy was crying and staff members were crying. And that very last event was related to morality and decency, and it was a bill that we had all worked very hard on. And I knew that it was over.

Four nights later, I had a dream and I've never forgotten it. I dreamt that I had come through the front gate of the White House and there weren't any guards there. And I just walked in and I walked past the West Wing and I walked over to the main entrance to the White House, and the door was standing open. And I walked in and there's no furniture there, and there were no people. And I went up the stairs to the residence and the Reagans were not there. And when I woke up, I realized that it was kind of a mourning for the end of a very exciting time when the things that I believed had a chance, had an opportunity. And now that era has slid into history.

And 21 years later, we now have a president who does not seem to understand anything that Ronald Reagan stood for. Each of those areas that I talked about and others are being undermined and contradicted today, and I grieve about that. As much as I celebrated the progress that was made in the 1980s, I look at what's taking place today, and I don't believe there is a single policy decision that Barack Obama has made that I agree with, and many of them are terrifying in their implications.

The matter of a strong military and what Ronald Reagan did with the Soviet Union, and essentially bringing it down. Lady Thatcher said he won the Cold War without firing a shot. And he did that through what? Peace through strength. Do you remember that? Peace through strength. And today, our president seems to believe in peace through appeasement.

What happened this week with the delegation going to Iran and talking, talking, talking? Talking does not matter to people. You can't discipline a child with talk, much less a dictator who hates you and wants to destroy you.

I'm kind of a student of history, and it does remind me a bit of Neville Chamberlain and how he went tearing off to Munich to talk to Adolf Hitler and sold Czechoslovakia down the drain and came back waving a piece of paper saying peace in our time. But there was no peace and more than 50 million people died in World War II as a result of the foolishness, not only of the British, but the French and others who did not seem to recognize the danger that was out there. But now we have a man who is going to spin this into absolute oblivion.

I have a grandson now, and you all have grandchildren, most of you, if not children, who are going to have to try to pay for that and it's not going to be possible.

And in terms of the military, you do know of course that the missile shield in Europe has been canceled. And where Ronald Reagan championed what the media came to call Star Wars, it has now essentially been forgotten and why that was so strategic and so important. And then the kind of policies that are occurring now with the family are just breathtaking. I mean, you may be aware that the President invited the GLSEN people to come to the White House. This is Gay and Lesbian Straight Education Network, and he essentially gave them everything that they asked for, including a stated goal to end the Defense of Marriage Act and what that will mean for the family. And of course, the Employment Nondiscrimination Act.

And this one really concerns me. In fact, Mike Farris, Dr. Farris is working very hard right now with the Supreme Court with regard to the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child. That is going to drive a wedge between children and parents. And it's coming. It is coming. It was Jesse Helms, another recipient of this award who stopped that through the '80s, and they now have

the votes to pass it, and it's coming. And I urge you to fight that with everything you got.

In fact, in fact folks, we're in greater danger right now, I think, than at any time since the Civil War. And we have to use all of our resources to fight for the things that we believe, fight for constitutional government, fight for the family, fight for life, fight for the future of this great nation, and to not do it with anger and vilification and name-calling. But this is after all a government of the people, by the people and for the people, and it's time that the people took the country back.

I will conclude with this. And I didn't write this for you. I wrote it for myself. And every now and then, I just feel like I've got to put some words down to express what I'm feeling, and this is what I wrote. Maybe you will identify with it.

What this country desperately needs in coming elections are political candidates who love conservative principles, who believe in them, who can articulate and defend them to the public, men and women who cherish liberty and are willing to give their very lives for it and will oppose the evil of liberalism and will speak with conviction about the institutions of marriage and parenting, and will revere and uphold free enterprise and defend the Constitution.

If American patriots will do this and then bathe their efforts in prayer, as did the Founding Fathers, then they will restore our country to its heritage and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity.

There are millions of conservative citizens out there who are outraged by what's going on. They're searching for ways to use their influence. Together, they and we can revitalize the American dream. And to risk mixing of metaphors let me say, let's go out there and win one for the Gipper. Thank you everybody.

Roger Marsh:

Dr. James Dobson's personal memories of President Ronald Reagan, reminding us of a pivotal time in our nation's history when strong leadership and unwavering principles helped restore America's confidence and moral foundation.

You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and a special archive presentation of Dr. Dobson's acceptance speech for the Ronald Reagan Lifetime Achievement Award. Now, if you missed any portion of today's broadcast, be sure to visit [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org).

Now for nearly 50 years, Dr. Dobson has dedicated his life to strengthening families through biblical truth and practical wisdom. These daily broadcasts continue that represent a core part of the vital mission, reaching millions of listeners with messages of hope and faith. If Dr. Dobson's ministry has touched your life, would you consider partnering with us to help reach even more families? Your gift of any amount helps us continue sharing trusted biblical

wisdom with those who need it the most. You can make a secure donation online at [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org) or give us a call at 877-732-6825.

And if you're looking for even more daily inspiration, we have partnered with the Bible app from YouVersion to bring you free reading plans filled with Dr. Dobson's trusted insights on family, faith and parenting. Whether you're waiting in the carpool or taking a quiet moment before bedtime, these brief devotionals offer practical wisdom for your family journey. Just open the Bible app on your phone or tablet or other smart device and search for Dr. James Dobson. You'll be glad you did. Well, I'm Roger Marsh. Be sure to join us again next time right here for another edition of Dr. Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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