



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: An Everyday Hero Using Radio Broadcasting to Spread the Gospel – Part 1

Guest(s): Rich Bott

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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.

Gary Bauer: Welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Gary Bauer, senior vice president of policy and culture here at JDFI. I'm also the host of the Defending Faith, Family, and Freedom podcast, and I'm really glad that you've joined us today. We've got another great show. They're all great, but this show is particularly great. It's another one of our installments of our Everyday Heroes series.

Our guest is Rich Bott. Rich was a dear friend to the Dobsons, as well as to all of us at the James Dobson Family Institute. And I think it's kind of ironic. Some of you are probably listening to the show today on the Bott Network. I also have a daily commentary I do that Rich runs on the Bott Network, and I'm very proud to have that opportunity every day to talk to his wide audience. Rich is the third-generation Christian broadcaster. He follows in the footsteps of his grandfather, the Reverend Dr. S.H. Patterson, who founded the Radio Prayer League and began broadcasting the gospel in 1926 in Denver, Colorado. And, of course, his father, Dick Bott, who founded KCCV Kansas City's Christian Voice in 1962, which was the beginning of the Bott Radio Network.

Now, today, Rich, my friend, serves as the president and CEO of Bott Radio Network. And look, this is not some seat-of-the-pants operation. It reaches over 64 million listeners across 130 stations. Rich is also part of the National Religious Broadcasters Hall of Fame, which our founder, Dr. James Dobson, was part of. And he also serves on the board for NRB, the Far East Broadcasting Company, and the D.L. Moody Center. He and his wife, Faye, live in Kansas. Rich, it is great to have you on Family Talk. I've been really looking forward to this time with you.

Rich Bott: Thank you so much, Gary. I'm so delighted to be with you on your broadcast, The End of Day Report. We're delighted to broadcast across Bott Radio Network as well as Family Talk. And Dr. Dobson and Shirley have been dear friends from the very beginning when they started to broadcast to families all across the nation. Bott Radio Network was among the first stations in the country to begin airing their broadcast.

Gary Bauer: You know, Rich, you and I and Dr. Dobson have probably been in about a thousand meetings over the years. And each of them was talking about and developing strategy about very important things to our country. And I know that Dr. Dobson had a great love for your whole family. Do you recall when you first recollect knowing of Jim and Shirley and whatever comes to your mind, I think our listeners would be...

Rich Bott: Yeah, Dr. Dobson had these big arena stadium events. There was a film series and then there would be live events on the road and we were able to promote them in several of our cities. And then I remember there came a time when he decided that he needed to get off of the road and spend more time with his family and focus on his family. And that's when he began to look to the radio to be able to be in one place and speak to people all across the country. And I think it started with the 25-minute Saturday or weekend program, which we carried on Bott Radio Network. And then it grew and grew and grew from there. And we've been with him every step of the way.

Gary Bauer: Rich, I remember one of the first interactions I had with Dr. Dobson. I was in the Reagan administration at the time. And one of the first questions he asked me, we were working on an issue together, but one of the first things he asked me was, "Well, Gary, tell me how you came to Christ." He always wanted to know that. So I know that he would want you to share with our listeners how you first came to the Lord, which has led to all of the things you have done and accomplished in your life since then.

Rich Bott: Well, absolutely. Dr. Dobson would say the most important thing to tell the next generation is be there. And he is there now. And we want to join him in Heaven one day. Always delighted to share that. I was blessed to grow up in a Christian family. My exposure to the gospel started at a very early age. My grandmother used to teach child evangelism fellowship. And so I was very familiar with the flannel graphs and the Bible stories. And as a five-year-old, I trusted Jesus as my Savior at her knee. Later, when I was 10, I reconfirmed that commitment at a Youth for Christ rally in Kansas City, Youth for Christ. And so that's a very, very important part of my testimony.

One time I was giving my testimony, and I just shared that part about going forward at a Youth for Christ rally, and my grandmother said, "Richie, don't you remember when you were five and you accepted Jesus?" And I said, "Yes, Grandma, I do remember that." So I'm always careful to include that whenever I share my testimony. But Gary, let me share this with you as well, if you don't mind. When I was in junior high then, I was at a Youth for Christ camp, and Kansas City Youth for Christ would take over John Brown University for a week for their summer camp. And there was a missionary speaker at chapel, and after the missionary chapel was over, then there was going to be lunch, and I remember I was looking forward to lunch. And he was speaking, and I wasn't paying too much attention until the very end. Then he said, "So if you're willing to serve the Lord on the foreign mission field as a missionary, then stand up and say, 'here am I, Lord, send me.'" And I remembered thinking just in that instant

that I don't want to be in Africa in a hut, and it'd be sweaty, it'd be hot, there'd be mosquitoes and flies, and it'd be miserable. I wouldn't want that. But everybody around me. All of my peers were standing up and saying, "here am I, Lord, send me." So as a hypocrite, I stood up and said, "Here am I, Lord, send me." And I felt such a pang of conviction in my heart that I lied to the Lord. I lied in front of all of my friends. And instead of going to lunch, I ran back to the dormitory and threw myself on the bed and said, "Lord, please forgive me for being a liar and a hypocrite." And I couldn't get release from that conviction until several months later as I wrestled with that.

I remember I was in bed and I realized that the Lord created me. And He loved me and He created me for a purpose. And I would never be happy in life unless I was doing exactly what it was that He created me for. And so I committed then to the Lord, I'll do whatever you want me to do. I would find fulfillment in that if I was following your will for my life. So that is, I look back on that and I think that was a real turning point in my life as I committed to the Lord to follow His leading and whatever.

Gary Bauer: What a wonderful story, Rich. That really is. Your heart breaks, mine breaks at all the statistical stuff about how many young people don't know Jesus, even though there's some evidence of maybe a quickening and awakening going on now. But in recent years, there has been a falling away from the church. There's so many youth problems, and of course, many of them, I think, get back ultimately to not understanding that there was a God that made you and a God that loves you, and that's what gives life meaning.

Rich Bott: I really think that we're involved in spiritual warfare. And so much of what the media says, well, that's crazy. You know, there's this assassin that did this crazy thing or this craziness. And as I look at that I think this isn't crazy, but this is evil. And we really are involved in spiritual warfare between good and evil. What we get to do here about Radio Network is provide a platform for some of the nation's finest Bible teachers and Christian news and information to help people grow in their faith and apply their faith in their daily life. That's where I'm finding real fulfillment in what we do.

Gary Bauer: That sounds fantastic. Well, Rich, I mentioned in the introduction, you're a third generation Bott involved in broadcast radio. Do you remember the first time you became aware of broadcast radio? In fact, somewhere in getting ready for the show, I think somebody mentioned that you actually, as a young man, had your own radio show at some point.

Rich Bott: Oh, I did. I did. It was called Teen Tempo. And it was every Saturday, and we would play some of the popular music for teenagers, Christian teens, back in the... that would be the early 1970s. I grew up in Christian radio in a very real sense. My sister and I used to play in the studio. My mom and dad would give us a little tape recorder to play with while they worked at the radio station, and we would pretend like we were preparing radio programs. And that was some of my earliest recollection. Sherry would preach, and I would say amen.

Gary Bauer: Wow, wow. And this is the 100th year anniversary, right, of the beginning of the Bott Family Enterprise? Is that right?

Rich Bott: Thank you. Yeah, my grandfather was a pioneer broadcaster, and that's on my mother's side. His name was Dr. S.H. Patterson. He came to Christ. He got saved at a camp meeting in western Kansas and felt the call of God on his life to be a preacher. And like a circuit-writing preacher, he preached in three different towns out there in western Kansas. And one day he went to his neighbor's house and his neighbor had one of these new radio receiver sets. But on that early, early radio receiver, he put on the headphones and heard R.R. Brown preaching the gospel out of Omaha. And he was captivated with the idea that you could be in one place. and preach the gospel and people over such a wide area could hear. And so he felt like God was calling him to harness this new technology for the expansion of his reach to reach more people with the preaching of the gospel.

So back then, if you're going to be on the radio, you had to live in a city that had a radio station. So he moved the family to Denver, Colorado and formed an organization called the Radio Prayer League, started an independent church there in Denver, and bought time on the local radio station for the Radio Prayer League broadcast. And that's the legacy that we have, and that goes back to 1926, which is exactly 100 years ago this year as we're recording this. And so we just thank the Lord for his faithfulness all these many years as we've kind of started. at the very infancy of radio. And now we're adding all of these new technologies together with that.

Gary Bauer: Isn't there an interesting story, I believe, about your grandfather and the Great Depression and how that got wrapped up in the value of radio also.

Rich Bott: Yes, there is. And I'm delighted to share that with everybody. So if my grandfather was broadcasting in the roaring 20s, 1926, well, then the crash came in 1929. And then you had the Great Depression. And there was a school right across the street from my grandfather's church. And he talked to the principal of the school and said, what can the church do to help the young people in your school? And he thought maybe they needed coats or warm clothing for the wintertime there in Denver. But the principal said, well, they're coming to school hungry and they can't learn while their stomach is growling and they're so hungry. And so my grandfather said, "We'll bring them to the basement of the church and we'll feed them a hot noon lunch every day." And the principal said, how many? And my grandfather said, as many as are hungry.

And so that began a hot noon lunch program in the basement of my grandfather's church, which expanded to churches all across Denver. My grandmother helped to oversee the kitchens in those churches, and they started a hot noon lunch program. And I guess the story is that FDR, the president, sent Harry Hopkins to meet with my grandfather to see what they were doing in Denver to feed the schoolchildren during the Depression. And that later became

the hot noon lunch program that was launched all across the country. So my grandfather would go on the radio and tell the people what they were doing and encourage the farmers that were listening, if you have produce or crops and then you have no market, bring them to the church and we'll prepare them to feed the school children. And so that's how that started. It was a ministry of the church.

Gary Bauer: Amazing. Now, at the time, radio was new enough that it was seen as a new technology, right? And today we live in the era of AI and everybody is worried about how AI could be misused and what the problems that it can cause. But generally, technology is only a vehicle. It could be used for good or evil. Was everybody happy about the idea of spreading the gospel through the radio?

Rich Bott: Well, that's an interesting story. My grandfather, he was a district superintendent for the Assemblies of God at that time, and when he moved to Denver, Denver already had a district superintendent, and he didn't think there needed to be two, and certainly there didn't. But also at that time, the AG, the Assemblies of God, had the view that the radio was an inappropriate vehicle to communicate the gospel. Very inappropriate because the devil is the prince of the power of the air. And you shouldn't use the devil's tools to try to communicate the Lord's Word. And my grandfather didn't hold to that. He felt like radio, as anything else, it's a tool. And it's how you use it. that depends on whether it's good or evil. And so my grandfather then started an independent work, and that's when he began his independent ministry and formed the Radio Prayer League. But it's just interesting, at the beginning, at the dawn of that new day of technology, people had to figure out how best to use it and how to consider it. And I imagine AI is in the same category today. It certainly has a tremendous potential for ill and evil, but maybe there are ways that we can use it to advance the kingdom at the same time.

Gary Bauer: Well, we have to, right? Because this is the age we live in. I'm very nervous about it. I've seen some of the ways it can be misused. And, of course, there's all kinds of national security questions, too, about what foreign enemies can do using AI. But these are great stories about your family, Rich. So over your life, you watched this and participated in it going from just a few stations. to now over 160 stations. Your grandfather would be amazed at what has happened with Bott radio under the leadership of your father, but also you. What has that felt like to see the tremendous success of this network?

Rich Bott: Well, it's just the Lord's doing it. In my grandfather's days in the early days of radio, radio stations didn't have a format. They were kind of like a newspaper to a city. You had a little bit of this and a little bit of that to serve all the different needs and interests of the people in the community. My grandfather always had a certain portion of the programming on his radio stations devoted to the preaching and teaching of the gospel, but it wasn't a Christian station per se. That came along later. And my mother and father had a radio station in Salinas, Monterey, California, a secular music and news station, and they were successful in operating it, but unfulfilled spiritually in wanting to serve the Lord.

And they had a vision for establishing a station that would be totally devoted to serving the Lord's people with quality Christian programming all day long. And they looked for a station in a city of a million or more that they could afford to acquire and try this new idea of a Christian formatted station that was all day, every day devoted to the Lord. And they found this country music station in Kansas City that was available for sale. And they were able to purchase that station and they changed the call letters from KANS to KCCV as Kansas City's Christian voice in 1962. And that's how we began Christian broadcasting all day, every day. And the Lord has used that vision and expanded it. And now we're into 145 stations, I believe, and all kinds of new technology and listening on your smartphone and your smart speaker and all kinds of new ways to listen. And literally with that, the teaching and preaching of God's Word is going out around the world, and we're hearing from people overseas as well as all across the country.

Gary Bauer: You know, Rich, there are so many new technologies now, and there's all this stuff streaming and the rest of it. You know more than anybody that radio and Christian radio is not dead. I mean, it is still reaching countless people. Give me your thoughts on that.

Rich Bott: Oh, well, yes, absolutely. Number one, we have a listener comment line, and we love hearing from our listeners. and hearing some powerful testimonies about how God has used Christian radio in their life. And there's lots of stories about how I just hopped into the car, and it was tuned to the radio, and there it was, and it came on, and it was just right what I needed to hear. And I call those divine appointments. And the Word of God is quick and powerful. It's sharper than any two-edged sword. It pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow. The Lord's Word will accomplish the purpose for which it is sent. And so as long as we keep the focus on the Word of God and applying it in the days in which we live, the Lord will bless that and He'll prepare hearts to receive that. And we see that every day. Radio is still a powerful, powerful tool. There's a lot of new technologies, but radio is still, it's ubiquitous. It's everywhere. You can't get away from it.

Gary Bauer: And it's, I don't even know what the right adjective is. You know, if you're in your car driving or whatever, and you've got the radio on, that voice can feel like that person's right there with you when you're driving. And you're literally... You almost feel as you would if you were just looking across the table at them. And I remember, you know, during all the years that I did work with Dr. Dobson, how often, particularly mothers, would come up to him and say, "I had several children. My husband was traveling all the time. I was pressured. I didn't know how I was going to handle everything. And Dr. Dobson, your voice would come across that radio. when I was in my kitchen or in my living room. And it would put me at ease, and it made me feel like somebody understood what the challenges were that I was facing." And I think that's what radio as a medium does.

Rich Bott: It absolutely does. Even though you're talking to thousands and thousands of people, you're talking to them one at a time. And it's a very intimate medium. It communicates the gospel very effectively. And, of course, we know that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. So we like to emphasize that as we broadcast over the radio. But Dr. Dobson's vision for family ministry came at a time when the family was ignored and being supplanted,

You know, in those early days when prayer was removed from schools. And he raised the alarm. And it's such a need today. And it continues for families that want to raise children in the way of the Lord. And that's part of the biblical commandment too, bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. And Dr. Dobson's ministry over the many years, and we're so blessed to broadcast his ministry on Bott Radio Network, has been such a powerful force. I say our format is quality Bible teaching. with Christian news and information. And Dr. Dobson spans that quality Bible teaching because so often he talks about the Bible, but also then how to apply it in your daily life, in your family life.

Gary Bauer: Wow, Rich, this is a great conversation. And I've got a whole bunch of other things I want to ask you about. And I know our audience... I'm sure would love to hear the answers to some other issues. Is there any chance, I know how busy you are, is there any chance we can get you for another day?

Rich Bott; Well, of course, Gary, I'd be delighted to. Thank you.

Gary Bauer: Fantastic.

Roger Marsh: Well, for more than 100 years, the Bott family has been using the airwaves to carry the gospel into living rooms, kitchens, and cars all across America. It's a legacy the Dobson family has been privileged to share in and one that continues with every Family Talk broadcast. You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. And today we featured a wonderful conversation with Rich Bott, the CEO and president of Bott Radio Network, and our own Gary Bauer, senior vice president of public policy and culture at the Dobson Policy and Culture Center. Now, if you'd like to hear today's program again or to pass it along to a friend who needs encouragement, visit us online at jdfi.org. When you support the ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, you're investing in something that reaches far beyond any single broadcast. You're helping preserve and promote the biblical principles that hold families together, introducing people to the gospel of Jesus Christ and defending the sanctity of human life and religious freedom in an increasingly hostile culture. The work Dr. That's 877-732-6825.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and on behalf of all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, thanks so much for listening today. Be sure to join us again next time right here for part two of Gary Bauer's important conversation with Rich Bott, an everyday hero using radio to spread the gospel.

It's coming up right here on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

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

Here's today's Dr. Dobson Minute with Dr. James Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: It's funny how some words pass in and out of common usage. I was thinking the other day, for example, about the phrase "good family man." David Blankenhorn, the head of an organization that studies cultural values, points out that this compliment, "good family man," was once widely used in our culture. Look at those three words that make up the phrase. Good, referring to widely accepted moral values. Family, which points to purposes larger than the self. And man, which says there's a norm of masculinity. It seems that contemporary culture no longer celebrates a widely shared ideal of such a man who puts his family first. Fortunately, it's not too late to bring this simple phrase back into vogue, a good family man. It is indeed one of the highest callings to which a man can aspire.

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