



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Sound of Hope: The Story of Possum Trot – Part 1

Guest(s): Bishop W.C. and Donna Martin

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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, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and our co-host for today's edition of Family Talk is Michele Bachmann. Michele is a valued member of our board here at the JDFI. She's also a former congresswoman for Minnesota's sixth congressional district. So, it's always nice to have the honorable Michele Bachmann in the co-host seat here on Family Talk. On today's program, we're gonna look at some staggering and frankly, quite disheartening statistics about the number of children in America's foster care system. Kids who are waiting for adoption, in some cases waiting for reconciliation with their birth parents. But we're also going to see that with God's help, anything is possible when faith meets action.

Our guests today here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk are Bishop W.C. Martin and his wife, Lady Donna Martin. They hail from the tiny community of Possum Trot, Texas, population about 700 people. Following a personal tragedy and a divine prompting, the Martins began what eventually would become an adoption movement through their Bennett Chapel Baptist Church family. What started as one family's obedience to, literally, take up the cause of the fatherless, that inspired the entire congregation to adopt, are you ready for this, 77 children from the foster care system, many of them with troubled backgrounds and special needs.

Now, a church in a town of 700 people adopted 77 children. That means they increased the population of Possum Trot by about 10 percent. Their remarkable journey was featured by Oprah Winfrey, *The Today Show*, and numerous other media outlets. And now their story has been made into a powerful feature-length film called *Sound of Hope: The Story of Possum Trot*. On today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's family talk, the Martins will share with Michele Bachmann how God used ordinary people to create extraordinary families and bring healing to children society had forgotten. So here now is our host, the Honorable Michele Bachmann, to further introduce our special guests on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Michele Bachmann: I want to welcome everyone to Family Talk today. This is the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. My name is Michele Bachmann. I am a

proud board member here at the JDFI and I'm your co-host for the day. And I know you are gonna be so happy you tuned in to this broadcast today because this is a life-changing broadcast for a number of needy children across the United States. And this is something I want you to know. This year when you're hearing this broadcast, the number of kids in foster care is staggering. The adoption of foster care analysis and reporting system tells us that today there's about 368,000 children in the child welfare system here in the United States and about one of every six of these kids live in California.

So again, wrap your head around this number. 368,000 children are in the child welfare system. More than 33,000 of these kids are living currently either in institutions or group homes or other out-of-placement. In other words, they're not with a family. 33,000 children. But nearly 330,000 children are living with foster parents right now and we thank God for the foster parents that are taking in these children. Because you see the ultimate goal of foster care is to reunite children with their biological parents. That's the goal. And last year in America, just over half of the kids in foster care, they were reunited with their families. That was a success story. And about 27% of those kids, about a fourth, were adopted. About 118,000, these are a lot of numbers I realize, but about 118,000 kids and youth today are waiting to be adopted. So, think about that. Over 100,000 kids in this country are waiting to be adopted. And these kids spend about 12 to 20 months in foster care.

Well, this is a subject that is near and dear to my heart. I can't wait for you to meet our guest today, Pastor W.C. and Donna Martin. I also know from first-hand experience the joys and the challenges of being a foster parent because my husband Marcus and I were touched by the Lord to invite foster children into our home and over the years, we invited 23 foster children into our home. We're so grateful for them. But my guests today on Family Talk are astounding. They took foster parenting to a whole new level because they were able literally to get their entire church involved in the process of foster parenting and adoption. And you can see their story. Angel Productions has made a powerful new movie. I've watched it, it made me cry. You will love this movie. It'll move your heart and your soul. It's called *Sound of Hope: The Story of Possum Trot*." What an awesome city. We all could wish we were from Possum Trot, Texas. Again, the movie is called *Sound of Hope: The Story of Possum Trot*. And it's the story really of a pastor, Bishop W. C. Martin and his wife, Donna, they're with me today to talk about their incredible story about their church, their wonderful church, and the folks who wound up taking in so many foster children. It literally expanded the population of the city of Possum Trot by over 10%.

So, Bishop W.C. Martin and Donna Martin, I want to welcome you to Family Talk today, and I also want to extend to you greetings on behalf of Dr. James Dobson and his wife, Shirley. They're very excited about this broadcast, and they send you their love and their warmest regards.

Donna Martin:

Thank you, Praise the Lord. We're excited to share the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ what He's called us to do as His children to continue to bring

forth the love of Jesus and show forth that love coming out of our own you know natural and selfish ways and to demonstrate why Jesus came and why He gave and why no one, no child should be without a loving forever family. We're just excited. We're so excited to share with the listeners and the viewers today and we know that the glory of God is going to rest upon this time that we are sharing and many lives are going to be changed and peoples are going to be excited about joining in unless, as my husband say, annihilate this problem.

Michele Bachmann: Donna, I love that, and I'm with you. I fell in love with you when I watched the movie, *Sound of Hope*. I fell in love with you because it was your heart that was changed. You were the first one that the Lord spoke to about kids who were challenged. And what I thought was incredible in the movie is you were having struggles with your own two children at home. You have a special needs son and you have a daughter, and you were just feeling overwhelmed and then your mother passed away. And then out of all these challenges in your life, you are willing to say yes when the Holy Spirit knocked on your heart's door. So again, let's just give this background here for those who joined us late. Bishop W.C. Martin is the pastor of Bennett Chapel Missionary Baptist Church in Possum Trot, Texas. And you certainly are missionaries with the children who were childless in your community. So just tell us a little bit for our listening audience, how did you two meet? How did you wind up in the town of Possum Trot? It's, just for our listeners, Possum Trot is just north of spring Texas. It's just outside of Houston on the eastern part of the state, by the way. So just tell us a little bit about you met and how you got to Possum Trot?

Bishop W.C. Martin: Well, I used to sing with my brothers. We had a group called the Martin Brothers and we used to sing all over the country. And we met this group out of Mansfield, Louisiana. We had a program, I think it was one Saturday night or Sunday evening, I can't remember exactly what time. But anyway, we ended up going there singing and doing a program down there, and when I saw my wife walking through the door, I just said in my own mind, I said, I'm gonna get her. So, she said that she didn't know and I said that she never would have married me but you know, that was a choice that God made. I can say this much that I think that the plan that God has, it's not always the plan that we have. That was not my plan, but it was God's plan, but somewhere and somehow God prevail and since He prevailed, we're going on 40-some years of marriage now.

Michele Bachmann: Forty-some, Donna, how long has it been?

Donna Martin: Forty-eight.

Michele Bachmann: Forty-eight. Forty-eight. Oh, what a blessing and what you have done with those 48 years of being surrendered to Jesus Christ. What a story. And again, Possum Trot, it's sort of northeast of Houston?

Bishop W.C. Martin: Yes, it's about, exactly about, three-and-a-half-hour drive. We are close to the Louisiana boarder, and about an hour and a half from Shreveport, Louisiana. So we kinda in the center, but it's a longer drive from Houston. And when the Lord

called me to preach, and then I ended up with the church, we drove literally 10 years back from Houston to Possum Trot. Three years was every other weekend, seven years was every single weekend. That's how I ended up with the church.

Michele Bachmann: Yeah. You were there. And so, this is a rural area, and it has a lot of challenges in that area. And around that time, now, Donna, you came from a big family. I understand.

Donna Martin: Yes.

Michele Bachmann: Tell us a little bit about your family and your situation.

Donna Martin: I was born to the late L.J. and Mertha Lee Cartwright, my mother birthed 21 children. I was raised in the household with 17 children. We were, if you will, poorer than Lazarus, because whatever the weather, temperature on the outside, it was that on the inside. But as I tell everybody, we were so loved and nurtured. Material things did not matter at all. My mother was the most loving kindest being in on this universe. And you know, when you're a child, all you know is just that little, that nurturing and that kindness and goodness and training. But when you grow up and you marry and you become a parent, and you, you don't know the backlash of the challenges that you have, that will cause you to lose your cools.

Michele Bachmann: Well, just for people listening to think of your mother birth 21 children, but, but there were 18 children that she raised. So, for most people, they're thinking, I can't handle the two kids I have or however many kids. How in the world, when your view of your mother as she was all kindness and love to hold your cool with 18, I'm sure, somewhat rambunctious children in that house.

Donna Martin: Absolutely.

Michele Bachmann: You know, to put food on the table and have a place to sleep. I mean, your mother was a miracle worker together with your dad.

Donna Martin: Absolutely. Absolutely. My mother knew her place, and her place was in God, as an intercessor, a prayer warrior, a devote Christian. My mother demonstrated the very being of Jesus Christ. My daddy was a humble man, quiet, you know, I really didn't know, he talked much until on the weekend.

Michele Bachmann: He couldn't with all the children all trying to speak.

Donna Martin: Right but he worked hard every day to provide for us and I believe that you know marriage is a commitment and then you have to realize why God bring you together to be a family and then when you bring forth the children, I don't know how you can raise, raise a family, or be committed to marriage without Jesus Christ. I don't know how anything can happen without a solid foundation. And I said here today, through the death of my mom, the grief, losing her, I was 35 years old when that happened. When my husband, I had the two children,

my husband was pastoring my home church. Possum Trot is where I was born and raised. When my mother passed away, I say five or six months after, you know leading up to that time, I had such a loneliness, an emptiness, I felt worthless. I felt helpless, I felt so, and we didn't use the word depressed. because I mean, where I come from, if you use that kind of word, then you backsliding Christian.

You don't believe in God. You own your way to hell because you're saying you don't have the faith. But I just felt pain. I felt so much pain. And one particular day, fast forwarding, the Lord spoke to me and He said, just as gentle as kind after crying to Him for days and months, being alone. If you saw me, if I was in the congregation of somebody, I could put this face on and I would be okay. I could serve and do the First Lady, if you will, walk. But when I was alone, that's when this pain and an agony would just come over me and I complained. I complained to the Lord. And so, one particular day He said to me, "I've heard you, and I see you. But think about those children that's out there that did not have what you had and a mother. I want you to foster and adopt."

Michele Bachmann: So the Lord was that specific with you.

Donna Martin: He said those words; I could have never thunk it. He said those words and immediately, it was like a calmness, sense of calmness came over me. I came back in, picked up my...and looked at the yellow page, just back in those days. You had your big book, your yellow page. I looked up 1-800-ADOPTION, picked up my phone, and dialed that number and said, "My name is Donna Martin. I wanna adopt some children." But Michele, what you have to understand, and I want the viewers to understand, through pain and suffering, most of the time, if you will abide in the Lord, it gives you a sense of life, a healing, so He could only heal me through my pain and give me a force, an assignment, that only what I knew best, what was given unto me, because we didn't have material things. We just had unconditional love. You just said it. A household of 17 children, you done birth 21, you've got all these kids with all these different you know, scenarios and situations and you had little or nothing to comfort only you had was the Word of God and making do with what you got. So I think and I believe without a doubt, it's never things that will cause us to bring forth the will of God, but it is situations.

Michele Bachmann: You're saying you had probably one of the greatest childhoods because you had two parents who loved you and brothers and sisters who loved each other. You're painting a picture for us as one of the happiest childhoods. Even though it was materially deprived, you had abundance when it came to love and acceptance and security. And you had that deep into adulthood when you were a mother with your own children. So, it's understandable how difficult this would have been for you to lose your link to life and that's your mother. So, when that happened and the Lord spoke to you about doing foster care, I imagine were you terrified? Were you exhilarated? What emotion did you feel when God spoke to you?

Donna Martin: Michele, immediately I did not have not a thought in my mind. It was like a sense of healing came over my entire being. It was like in the center of my heart, it was such a burning day after day, but when the Lord spoke those words to me, an overwhelming shelter of the spirit of God, I was no longer in pain.

Michele Bachmann: So, you knew that you knew that you knew that you'd heard from the Lord.

Donna Martin: I knew without a doubt when the Lord spoke that, I didn't have to go ask nobody to confirm it. I didn't have to do anything. I had a knowing that I knew that I knew that I knew that there was nobody but Lord.

Michele Bachmann: And you had to obey.

Donna Martin: Look, that was one of the great, you know how you can say yes without opening up your mouth? Because you can say yes with your mouth and no with your heart. I said yes with my heart.

Michele Bachmann: And yes, with your mouth, you had said it. Well, let's hear from your beloved husband who was the pastor of the church and the father of Princeton and the father of your daughter, Ladonna. And he saw you going through the pain of losing your beautiful mother. He knew how wonderful your mother was as a parent and just the challenges and struggles you two had gone through with your special needs son and the depression or whatever you want to call it for those four months after your mom was gone. And so, then I assume you told your husband, you picked up the phone and you called 1 -800-ADOPTION, but you tell us W.C. What was like for you as a pastor? How did Donna tell you what the Holy Spirit had told her?

Bishop W.C. Martin: Well, basically, she just said it. You know, that's what the Lord said, told her to do. My concern was, and anyone know that a father, you have a boy baby or something like that, you always want him to be everything on the up and up. But unfortunately, that was not the case here 'cause my biggest concern was for him. And to make sure that we have, it was enough for us to go around just for him. And at that time, we had another, my daughter too. So and I'm one of those people that look at the household first. So I had a struggle with it in the beginning, but after I saw that it seemed like something that God was doing, then I began to kind of follow on and follow suit and get involved in it. And you know, I really didn't know all of this. I really didn't. I didn't have a clue that adoption was either something that was going on in this world.

Michele Bachmann: So, you didn't push back on Donna. When Donna came to you and said the Holy Spirit has shown me that we need to adopt some kids or foster some kids, did you just say great or did you push back? What was it like?

Bishop W.C. Martin: I pushed back because and the first thing I wanted to do is what about my son? That's going to be the key right there. How are we going to do this with what we already got to deal with, you know, because there were like compound interest there, you know you've got one problem already and then you got children that

come in that you don't even know anything about. That's kind of a double whammy. That's a double whammy right there. So that's... I didn't go along with it in the beginning, I just didn't, because I felt like that, we all of our time was devoted to him.

Michele Bachmann: Because you were a pastor of a church and you had your whole congregation to deal with and didn't you also have a second job?

Bishop W.C. Martin: Yes, I worked every day. I was an insurance salesman, and I had a debit, you know, what they call a route. In other words, I would go to people's houses in different places and pick up money every day. And sometimes I get home six, seven, and eight o'clock at night, leave out in the morning, get home six o'clock because I'd be out there all day long collecting money for my insurance. Because that's what I'm doing. That's the way I made my living.

Michele Bachmann: Well, Bishop W.C. and Donna Martin this is so good I'm wondering would you give us the blessing of staying with us to do another show tomorrow would you be willing to do that?

Donna Martin: Absolutely we're excited to do that.

Michele Bachmann: I got more questions for you God bless, we'll see you tomorrow

Roger Marsh: Well, you've been listening to a special edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and the remarkable testimony of Bishop W.C. Martin and his wife, Lady Donna Martin. Their obedience to care for "the least of these" literally sparked a movement that forever changed the citizens of Possum Trot, Texas and the 77 foster children who are taken under their wing in this town of just around 700 folks. Now, if today's conversation about adoption and foster care has touched your heart. I encourage you to visit drjamesdobson.org/familytalk where you can listen to it again, or share it with friends. You'll also find information about the Martin's ministry, Saving a Generation, and the powerful new film, Sound of Hope: The Story of Possum Trot, when you visit their online as well, at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk or by accessing the Family Talk app.

Now, the story we heard today here on Family Talk represents exactly what we strive to champion here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. Ordinary people allowing God to work through them to strengthen families and transform lives. These broadcasts of hope and biblical truth literally reach millions of listeners every day offering guidance and encouragement to those navigating life's challenges. We encourage you to partner with us in prayer and also financially to bring more stories of redemption and hope to families all across America. Every dollar donated, regardless of size, helps us continue to promote God's love and design for children and families. To join in this mission, you can make a secure donation online when you go to drjamesdobson.org. You can also give a gift over the phone when you call 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Or if you prefer, you can send your donation 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. Once again, our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, or just address JDFI for short. P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code 80949.

Well I'm Roger Marsh, and on behalf of Dr. James Dobson and all of us here at the JDFI, thanks so much for joining us today for this inspiring conversation featuring W.C. Martin, his wife, Lady Donna Martin, and our guest co-host, the Honorable Michele Bachmann. Please tune in again next time as we continue hearing about how God transformed the lives of 77 foster children in a town of about 700 people and how the entire community was transformed through their story as well. That's coming up next time right here on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust, for the family you love.

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

Dr. James Dobson: This is James Dobson again as we close today's program I just want to thank so many of you out there who make this broadcast possible with your contributions and I want to tell you how much your generosity is appreciated.