



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: A Deeper Look at Christian Persecution

Guest(s): Wes and Vicky Bentley

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Dr. James Dobson: Hello, everyone. You're listening to Family Talk, a radio broadcasting ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. James Dobson, and thank you for joining us for this program.

Roger Marsh: Well, welcome to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. You know, when it comes to Christian persecution, sometimes the silence from the church is deafening. But on today's Family Talk broadcast, we're going to shatter that silence just a little bit. Our guests are Wes and Vicky Bentley, who have spent decades serving the persecuted church in some of the most dangerous corners of the world. Wes is a former U.S. Marine who founded Far Reaching Ministries back in 1998, bringing food, medicine, and the hope of Jesus Christ to the war-torn regions of Sudan and Uganda. Vicky disciples women and children caught in the crossfire of violence and unimaginable hardship. Now, I should mention that some of what you're going to hear on today's Family Talk broadcast is very heavy, and it may not be suitable for younger listeners, so listener discretion is definitely advised. But please keep in mind, these are our brothers and sisters in Christ, and their stories deserve to be heard. So let's join our own Dr. James Dobson now for this important conversation on today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: We are here in Washington, D.C. again today, and as a matter of fact, several days in a row here for very important activities and meetings. And we did our program from this studio and had as our guest Senator Sam Brownback from Kansas, our great friend and brother, Michael Horowitz, who is a distinguished scholar, an author and the director of the Project for International Religious Liberty at the Hudson Institute here in D.C., and a Jewish man who has a passion to defend persecuted Christians around the world. It's quite a remarkable story, and what we said and what we heard, I'm sure, resonated in the hearts of our listeners because there is so much persecution going on, people being murdered, children being murdered to murder their parents. There are more people who were martyred in the 20th century than all previous centuries combined. I mean, it is just unbelievable what is happening. And we are today going to return to that issue with two other guests that I know will touch the hearts of you, our listeners, and let me introduce them to you. First is Wes Bentley. He's the director of Far Reaching Ministries, a mission organization that works with persecuted people in Africa, especially in southern Sudan and Uganda. And he has seen firsthand the horrible atrocities that are happening to innocent men, women, and children because of their faith. And we appreciate so much having the chance to have him here with us. And also here is his wife,

Vicky, and we are pleased to meet both of them. I met them a few minutes ago, but I tell you, they already have a place in my heart. Vicky is in charge of women's ministries in the Far Reaching Ministries there in Africa. She teaches seven Bible studies to women in the Sudan, and they have just made a commitment of their lives to those who are being persecuted. So Wes and Vicky, I'm really honored to have you here today.

Wes Bentley: Thank you, Dr. Dobson. It's a pleasure to be here.

Dr. James Dobson: Vicky, you didn't know you were going to be on the program today.

Vicky Bentley: I didn't, so thank you so much. It's a blessing to be here.

Dr. James Dobson: I'm so glad to meet you. I met you here at the Family Research Council. I knew I was going to interview Wes, but it's good to have you here because you have also just a great concern for what is taking place. Now, we're talking to people across the United States and Canada and then around the world with folks who have no idea what the need is and why you would leave your home country and have your children raised much of the time by your extended family in order to be in places where it's very unpleasant. You're seeing death and misery, and in fact, you've been in danger yourself. Wes, why would you do that?

Wes Bentley: Well, Dr. Dobson, for myself personally, it's a biblical command. James tells us that pure and undefiled religion is to take care of widows and orphans in their need. And God has made known to us the tremendous suffering of the women and children, especially in the Sudan and northern Uganda. And so we really felt a calling on our lives to be there to really not only reach those people for Jesus Christ, but also to somewhat protect them in building sanctuaries, places where they can go and live safely, sleep safely, not worry about being murdered at night.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, I said a few minutes ago that children are actually being required to murder their parents. Is that hyperbole or is that fact?

Wes Bentley: This is a fact. On a recent trip that I had, I spoke with a young girl. She was 10 years old. And she had been abducted by the LRA rebels in the north. And her first night was one of tremendous terror. When the rebels abducted them, they began to grab all of the possessions. They made the people loot them and carry very heavy loads. One of the young boys that was carrying about a 100-pound bag of corn maize, he was struggling. He probably only weighed about 100 pounds, but he'd been shot in the leg. And because he was slowing them down, they made him lay on the ground, and the other children were forced to kill him. She said during the night, they would rape the women, and then there would come a point.

Dr. James Dobson: And rape the girls.

Wes Bentley: And rape the girls, the young girls, early as the age of nine years old and above. One of the reasons the rebels do this is to make future soldiers for their military. She said that at one point they decided they were going to kill the children's parents but rather than kill the parents themselves, they decided they would have the children kill their own parents. And this young girl was given a machete. She was told to kill her mother and father. Initially, she refused. But they said to her, they said, "If you do not kill your mother and father," they said, "We will kill your little brother, we will kill your little sister, we will kill your mother, we will kill your father, and then we will kill you." And the little girl took the machete and she killed her parents. When we heard this, it's really hard to know what to say to a child. So we asked this young girl, if we could give you one thing in this life, what would it be that you would want? And this child of 10 years old looked up at us and said, "If you could give me one thing in this life, if there's only one thing that I could have. I would want to know that God has forgiven me for what I did to my parents. If I could lay my head down at night and if I could sleep and I could know that I had been forgiven, that is the only thing that I would want in this life."

Dr. James Dobson: Vicky, what's it do to you when you hear those kind of stories? And that for you is not a long ways away. You saw it. You heard it.

Vicky Bentley: Yeah, I think the biggest thing that's missing in Africa is discipleship. There are all kinds of organizations providing humanitarian care, medical care, the different types of services that children need. But when you hear of trauma like this, no amount of counseling can heal those kinds of wounds. They need the love of Jesus. They need to know. Over and over again, what you hear from people in northern Uganda is they feel that they have no voice, that the rest of the world doesn't know or care what they're going through.

Dr. James Dobson: One of the most controversial things. that you said to me before we went on the air is that many of the humanitarian relief organizations that come in the name of Christ stop there. They don't go on to introduce them to the giver of life. It's not Christ-centered. Now, that's not a universal criticism, but all too often it is, isn't it?

Vicky Bentley: It is. And what they need more than anything is to know that in Christ, they can find a hope. They can find forgiveness. They can find a new beginning. And they need support. They need people to go. We need other missionaries. We're just you know, a few, but we need more.

Dr. James Dobson: Wes, you also told me a story about a little girl who needed \$4 or the equivalent of \$4 to get clothes to go to school.

Wes Bentley: I was at a funeral for a young girl's mother. Her mother was trying to find money for clothing for the child. She needed 6,000 Ugandan shillings, which is just under \$4. The child kept saying, Mom, I need money for clothing. And the mother didn't have the money, but she knew a place where there were some bamboos growing. And they used these to make the roofs of their huts. And she

thought, well, if I can get those bamboos, I can get the clothing for my daughter. And she went out there. She risked it. She was shot five times in the leg and once in the head. And as I sat there, that young child was just sobbing in my arms. She felt so guilty. She felt that she was responsible for her mother's death. And it's one of those times that you say, honey, you had nothing to do with this. These were evil men that did an evil thing, and your mother was just trying to be a good mother. And it's very difficult to see a child suffer like that. We did pay for her schooling. We are trying to minister to her. But she will suffer for many years unless people really reach out to her.

Dr. James Dobson: Do you just cry all the time?

Wes Bentley: You have to learn to some point to put a wall up in your heart. You cannot mourn over everything you see. And working in southern Sudan and northern Uganda, we've seen so much killing and so many tragedies. I've been through fields of hundreds of dead bodies of women and children that had been killed by the Islamic armies from cartoon. You have to be able to minister to those people, to medicate them, to get them to whatever services they need at that time, and also share Christ with them. So there are times that you weep, and there's times that you hold back, and you do what God's called you to do.

Dr. James Dobson: Vicky answers the same question. As a woman, what does that do to you?

Vicky Bentley: It's difficult, but I know that there's hope in Jesus, and I know that the best thing that I can give people is the faith that I have and the knowledge that I have of the Scripture. Yeah, I do cry. There are times that I'm overwhelmed.

Dr. James Dobson: Address the issue of why all the bloodshed. I mean, we have talked yesterday and again today about religious persecution. What's that have to do with a child killing their parents? What's the motivation of these armies that are doing such bloody things?

Wes Bentley: Well, in the Sudan, they're being killed because they're Christians and they're fighting Muslims. In the north of Uganda, it's the Muslims that are funding a cult to kill the Christians. So indirectly, it's still funded by the Islamic army in Khartoum.

Dr. James Dobson: So it is a matter of their faith that's putting them at risk.

Wes Bentley: Oh, absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: And they know that.

Wes Bentley: They absolutely know that.

Dr. James Dobson: And when they accept Christ, they know that they're risking murder or worse.

Wes Bentley: People are very aware that being a Christian can cost you your life. We've talked to many people that have been tortured for their faith, and they know that if they were to give their lives to the Islamic belief that this persecution would go away. But they also know that it would cost them eternity.

Vicky Bentley: I think in northern Uganda, it's a unique situation as well, because Joseph Kony believes himself to be a Christian, and he propagates a kind of spiritualist ideals.

Dr. James Dobson: And who is he?

Vicky Bentley: He is the leader of the Lord's Resistance Army. And I was explaining to you a little bit before the program that I think one of the great tragedies about what's happening in northern Uganda is you have a group of people and specifically children. The statistics are that 12,000 children have been abducted in the last year. And they're abducted to be taken into this man's army, but not only is he taking them and forcing them to fight, he's also indoctrinating them with all kinds of witchcraft and false teaching. So these children are told, I'm doing this to make Uganda a Christian country. And they're coming away from committing these horrible atrocities thinking they've done it in the name of God because of what he's telling them. So, you know, as Christians, it's our responsibility to defend the faith. So who's going to teach these children what's true?

Dr. James Dobson: Wes, I've heard that as many as a million Christians have been killed in the Sudan.

Wes Bentley: Actually, the figure years ago was 2.2 million people had been killed during the war. And that was years ago. There's really not been an updated statistic since then.

Dr. James Dobson: Taken off into slavery. The women raped. Exactly. The men killed.

Wes Bentley: Women have been sold into slavery. Men have been murdered. Children have been used to be soldiers for the Islamic armies. This is absolutely happening.

Dr. James Dobson: Wes, help us address the person that is listening to us out there. We'll say a person here in the United States Life is stressful here It is. We go at too fast a pace. There are too many pressures on us. We're having difficulty on many fronts. Our children have their own troubles and difficulties. And there are parents listening to us right now who say, oh, that is awful. That is terrible. But I've got about all I can handle. And then we come on the air and say, people are being raped and butchered and tortured. And I can't get my arms around that. That's Africa. Africa's always been trouble. And somehow, I can't let that into my heart or I'll break. What do you say? You've gone there and you have given your life to it because you did let it in.

Wes Bentley: I think that for most people, it's just understanding that we have a responsibility. Hebrews commands us to remember those who are suffering. as though we were there suffering with them ourselves.

Vicky Bentley: And if I could just say that I also think it helps us with our perspective. We hear all the time that our culture is one of instant gratification. We want changes today. I know for me, when I walk into the home of a family that I'm ministering to, and I know that they don't have anything to eat, and yet they've taken the little bit that they have to bring me a cup of tea to welcome me because they love me and they want to demonstrate their faith. That it challenges me. It gives me perspective. Why am I so worried about the problems in my own life and just shutting myself off to what's happening in someone else's life? So even if you feel like you can't give or you can't open your heart fully, allow the Lord to change your perspective and show you that there's a whole world of people out there.

Dr. James Dobson: You have to be aware, Vicky, that you could have a much easier life here in the United States without dealing with dying people and people in miserable, grinding poverty, people who don't have enough to eat. You don't have to expose yourself to that. You come back here and get a decent job. You're a bright woman or just settle down to whatever God has for you. And yet there you are in a very difficult setting. Why?

Vicky Bentley: Because I love Jesus. And Paul said, "Woe is me if I don't preach the gospel." I don't want to be anywhere else but where God wants me to be. And if these hands and these feet, as feeble as they are, can be used to give that gift of faith to someone else, I want to be used.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, my. Well, you have a 501c3, a non-profit organization here in the United States to support the work that you're doing. But there never is enough money, is there?

Wes Bentley: There's always more needs to be met, Dr. Dobson, but we believe that God is faithful to provide for those needs.

Dr. James Dobson: For the want of \$4, that little girl would have had clothes so that she could have gone to school.

Wes Bentley: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: That just, you know, I feel so guilty when I see the excesses of materialism in my own life, you know, and feel some responsibility. I hope our listeners are feeling it too. You know, I talked some time ago about the principle of limited tears, that the human emotional apparatus is such that you can't cry over everything. I mean if you knew all the little bald headed children in children's hospitals around the world who are being treated for cancer and they're dying and some of them don't know why and many of them suffer unbelievable indignities and pain and I've been there. I've seen those children and I felt their pain but if you let all of that pain is and my understanding 40,000 people die on the earth someplace every day and if you knew the details of those 40,000 deaths and you allowed yourself to focus on it, I think I'd go crazy if you have any sensitivity at all. So your natural impulse is to limit that which you can cry. Can't cry

about everything. And so what we tend to do is narrow the circle of that which gets to us. And we tend to cry about our own pain and that of those that we love and are closest to us. And then what's out beyond that is sometimes out of sight, out of mind. And I fear that's the way it is with the persecuted church. There's just too much pain out there for us to handle, but we absolutely must. I believe the Lord himself calls us to it. You feel that too, don't you?

Wes Bentley: I do share with people, and let me just share one short story here. I think it's important for people to understand that it's one soul at a time. And a number of years ago, I was in Sudan, the Islamic government had attacked and displaced a village. And the people in the village moved down to another village and they began to starve to death. When we got to this village, there was about 9 to 12 people a day that were starving to death. The one face that mattered to me is I went into the hut of a pastor that was there. And him and his wife had grown enough food to feed their family through the dry season. But when the people came down and they began to see the children starving to death, they decided to quit eating and give their food to the children. The day that we arrived, his wife had died of starvation. He was too weak to get up out of the hut and take her out. And we took her out, we buried her. We came in and we laid hands on him. We prayed for him. And he went home to be with the Lord. And what I share with people is we can't understand all that's going on. But if we can just see it through the eyes of one person at one point in time, we'll understand a little bit better what our brothers are going through.

Dr. James Dobson: That is an incredible story. And again, that's an eyewitness story. You saw it.

Wes Bentley: I saw it.

Dr. James Dobson: You knew them.

Vicky Bentley: What people here need to remember is it doesn't matter if you can't go. It doesn't matter if you don't have the skills. It's about Who you know. And we know the king. We know Jesus Christ. We know the one Who has the answer to their problems. And if we will just stand in the gap, like the Scripture says, and pray and say, God, what is my role? What do I do? How do I respond? He'll be faithful. He'll show you. Not everyone's called to be a missionary, you know, but we each have our own gifts and God will use each one of us. He wants to.

Dr. James Dobson: I'm going to ask you a very, very personal question, and obviously if you don't want to answer it, you don't have to because this goes right to your closet. Would you share with us what you have been praying about in the privacy of your home with Wes, in the privacy of your closet? What have you been talking to Him about that you haven't told anybody?

Vicky Bentley: Well, we're just in the process. In fact, that's why we're here in Washington of trying to get a solution. What can help these kids in northern Uganda? What can put an end to the LRA? And the Lord's spoken very clearly to both of us through the Scriptures, specifically Psalm 94. If you have a Bible, you can read it. But our

heart is that God sees what wicked people are doing. He knows, and we know that He could stop these atrocities from happening at any point in time. And so we've just been asking, Lord, why is it delaying? Because we know He has an answer, but that's the thing that's been on our hearts the most.

Dr. James Dobson: How about you, Wes?

Wes Bentley: Dr. Dobson, I would say that my wife put it very well, the cries of the children. There's a point that when you see children suffering and you see children cry here in America, but there's a difference of the way they cry over there. There's a fear that's there. Children cry because they're unhappy there. They cry over there because they're afraid. And one of the things that we did and feel very called to do is protect these kids. And we built a sanctuary, and I guess our heart for these children is to be able to say to them, "Honey, you lay your head down tonight, and you sleep, and you dream the dreams that a child is supposed to dream. Nobody's going to hurt you tonight, not on my watch." See, tonight the body of Christ is going to wrap its arms around you, and we're going to protect those that cannot protect themselves.

Dr. James Dobson: Thank you all, not only for being here today, but for what you're doing for the cause of Christ. You put me to shame.

Wes Bentley: Dr. Dobson, it's a pleasure for us to be here, and we just love your ministry and respect you so much.

Dr. James Dobson: Vicki, thank you, my friend.

Vicky Bentley: We're the ones who are honored.

Dr. James Dobson: And I trust that it will be a successful trip here to Washington, D.C. and to this country. There are generous people here, and they do care, and they will open their hearts. Thanks for being our guest today.

Wes Bentley: Thank you.

Vicky Bentley: God bless you.

Roger Marsh: You know, it's easy to forget how much comfort we take for granted until we hear from those who follow Christ at the risk of everything. Wes and Vicky Bentley remind us that our brothers and sisters overseas aren't statistics, they're family. You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, featuring a sobering conversation Dr. Dobson had with his guests, Wes and Vicky Bentley, the founders of Far Reaching Ministries. If you missed any part of the program, or if you'd like to share it with a friend, be sure to visit drjamesdobson.org, or if it's easier, just remember jdfi.org. They are one in the same.

The Dr. James Dobson. Institute exists to strengthen families, defend the sanctity of human life, to champion religious freedom, and to introduce as many people as possible to the gospel of Jesus Christ. That's an important mission, and we can't carry it out without you. So we invite you to partner with us today. When you donate, you help ensure that trusted, biblically grounded programming keeps reaching families who need it, day after day, all across America and literally all over the world. You can give a secure donation online when you go to drjamesdobson.org, or if it's easier, just click on jdfi.org. It'll take you to the exact same place. You can also call a member of our constituent care team. That number is 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Or if you prefer, you can send your contribution through the U.S. Postal Service. Our ministry mailing address is the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code, 80949. Once again, our ministry mailing address is the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, or you can just use those initials JDFI for short. P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code, 80949.

Well, 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 when I'll have a fascinating conversation with Lana Silk, the president and CEO of Transform Iran Ministries, talking about the amazing things that God is doing in a persecuted and now war-torn part of the world. That'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.

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