



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: In the Business of Serving God

Guest(s): Drayton McLane

Air Date: August 26, 2026

- 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 ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and on today's program, we're bringing you a classic conversation featuring our own Dr. James Dobson and a remarkable businessman whose success never pulled him away from his faith in Christ. Drayton McLane built one of the largest grocery distribution companies in America. He then served as vice chairman of Walmart and at one point was the owner of the Houston Astros Major League Baseball team. But what impressed Dr. Dobson the most about Drayton McLane was his deep love for Jesus Christ and the work ethic he passed down through the generations of his family. So let's get into it. Here now is that timeless conversation on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.
- Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello, everyone. I'm James Dobson, and you're listening to Family Talk, which is a radio and Internet program dedicated to the preservation of the family and also of the defense of righteousness in the culture. And we certainly have our hands full there at this time, I can tell you, with all that's been going on in this country. We have a very very special guest with us today who has recently become a very respected friend of mine. And he is Drayton McLane, who is a very accomplished entrepreneur and businessman. He's known all over the world. Drayton is chairman of the board and CEO of the Houston McLane Company. He was chairman of the board and CEO of the Houston Astros until 2011. And he's a former vice chairman of Walmart stores. Drayton is also on the board of Chase Bank in Texas and on the board of Scott White Hospital. And I have a connection there because 60 years ago, my father was a patient in that hospital. He had a terrible infection and he nearly died. And the doctors there restored him to health. So I have reason to appreciate that hospital. I could name about 40 other enterprises, involvements, responsibilities, and businesses that Drayton McLane has. But most impressive is his love for Jesus Christ and his commitment to the Christian way of life. Welcome, Drayton. It's a pleasure to talk to you.
- Drayton McLane: Well, thank you, Dr. Dobson. It's an honor. I have enjoyed for many, many years listening to your broadcast and then reading your books, and you certainly are an inspiration to millions and millions. We have two sons, and as they were

teenagers, and we had them read some of your thoughts and ideas, and now they're parents. And it's interesting to see them quote you, to their children.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, the time goes on.

Drayton McLane: You've had a lasting impact.

Dr. James Dobson: Time goes on. I think I'm on my fourth generation of families that I have had an opportunity to talk to. So that's a pleasure. How long have you been a believer in Jesus Christ?

Drayton McLane: Well, I'm 79 years old. I had a birthday about 10 days ago, but I became a believer in a small town in central Texas, Cameron, Texas, a town of a little over 5,000. And I had two of the most powerful Christian parents that anyone could have. I had two older sisters, and our Christian faith was the most important thing in our lives. And I became a Christian when I was seven years old. I can even remember the pastor's name. Lester Morris was the pastor in our church in Cameron and ultimately became one of the most prominent pastors in Texas. But he was young, but I can still remember the sermon he preached.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, I would like to say to our listeners, don't tell me that a child can't understand a relationship with Christ. I was four, so I beat you by three years.

Drayton McLane: I didn't understand all of the philosophy and all of that, but I knew that was what I wanted to do, and I could see in my parents the type of human beings they were, and I wanted to be a person like that.

Dr. James Dobson: From what I understand, you come from a strong family, especially the men in your family, and the story of your heritage begins with your great-grandfather in Texas. Wasn't he the one that began the grocery business there? That was in the 1800s, wasn't it?

Drayton McLane: Yes, it was. My grandfather, Robert McLane, came to Texas from Abbeville, South Carolina in the 1880s and in 1894, he went in the wholesale grocery business. And then in 1921, when my father graduated from college, he went in business with his dad. And in 1959, when I graduated from college, I went in business with my dad. We were in the grocery distribution business and I learned values. I learned how to be a businessman from my father, but I learned honesty and integrity and high Christian principles in business from him. And he constantly said he learned it from his father.

Dr. James Dobson: You learned to work very early. I read that at nine years of age, you were sweeping the floors on Saturday and stocking inventory and really getting acquainted with the grocery business.

Drayton McLane: Well, my father taught me a great work ethic, and he learned from his father. But when school was out at the end of May, my father would give me one week to enjoy my friends and summer vacation. And then he would get me up at 6:15

every morning. And he had turned the light on in my room. And I remember the very first time he did that, I got up and turned it off. And he came back in and said, don't ever do that again.

And he said, we're going to leave at 6:45 to go to work, and I would sweep. That was the high level of work I was doing. I was nine, and I would work till noon. And so I did that year after year, and I kind of had to grit my teeth a lot. But when my oldest son was nine, I did the same thing to him and taught him that work ethic. And so that has continued several generations.

Dr. James Dobson: Does it concern you that many of today's children do not know? how to work and aren't learning those principles?

Drayton McLane: I think it certainly is that God has created us and has prepared us and we get a good education, but we have to learn business ethics and then we have to learn that hard work. I think we kind of get spoiled sometimes thinking when we graduate from college, we're going to start as a vice president. When I got out of college, my dad, I was the 67th employee. And I thought I was going to be his number one assistant. And I came back and I told him I wanted to become a businessman. I wanted to learn from him. And he certainly was excited. And I said, well, what's going to be my first job? Thinking I was going to be his executive assistant. And he said, your job will be on the third shift at night loading trucks. And I was shocked. And I said, "Dad, I've been to college for six years." He said, "Well, that didn't prepare you for anything that you need to do for us to start with. You need to learn this business from the ground up."

Well, Dr. Dobson and I appealed to my mother. I was 23 years old, and I told her, I said, "Boy, I've got all this education. I should start at the top." And she said, "That's between you and your father." Well, anyway, he told me if I was going to work for him, I started on the third shift. And I worked in the warehouse, the distribution center, for about 18 months.

Ultimately, I had to say that was the kindest thing he did for me because I learned the appreciation of people that are doing the work. I learned how to think like they thought, to understand them, to appreciate them, and to communicate with them and try to inspire them. And then I learned how the business works. So later, when I had more responsibilities, I could have a problem and I knew how to fix it because I had learned it from the very beginning. I think that's one of the mistakes today. People don't want to start at the bottom. They want to start in the middle or at the top.

Dr. James Dobson: What else did your father teach you that made you a man? The man we know today.

Drayton McLane: To be responsible for your decisions. You know, it's awfully easy to cast blame or say it's someone else's problem. But to accept responsibility, even if you weren't totally responsible for something not succeeding, that you accept responsibility and make it right. He said it really doesn't matter who's right or wrong or who made the mistake. The customer's upset. Make it right with the

customer. And I apply that to life and as a Christian that, you know, we can get a little upset with our fellow believers or we can get upset with God, but it's our responsibility. So accepting responsibility was one of the things that he taught me. And then seeing the worth and the value of every human being. I don't care if it's someone doing a menial job. That job needs to be done and work with that person, inspire that person, and then try to see if you can figure out a better way he could do that where it's not such a physical task. So you make his job easier.

Dr. James Dobson: What's the scope of the wholesale grocery business you have today?

Drayton McLane: Well, we started, when I started it, I was a 67th employee and we delivered about a 50-mile radius of Cameron, Texas and central Texas and today we deliver, McLane Company delivers all over the United States but when I started this was in 1959 it was doing about two and a half million and today McLane company will do about 45 billion, so it's a large operation with 18,000 employees. So it has expanded all over the United States. We supply supermarkets, convenience stores, restaurants, food products, perishable food products, and all type of food products literally all over the United States. But God has blessed us, and our corporate mission established years ago, learned from my dad, and we said it to every employee, and every employee means honesty, integrity, and high Christian principles.

Dr. James Dobson: So really, your Christian faith has worked as a foundation for your company. You put those principles into effect.

Drayton McLane: Absolutely. You know, I think sometimes we make things too complicated. I read a lot of mission statements for businesses, and it's so complicated. I don't think people understand what it is or they don't really relate to it. And so that was why we just said honesty and integrity and high Christian principle and said to the employees and to the customers, hold us responsible. If you see we're not living up to that, hold us responsible for that. So it makes management's job more important. But if you do the right thing every day and you just keep pushing, good things will happen.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you and I have discovered that we have other things in common. I grew up in Texas in a strong Christian family. And you and I both played tennis as kids.

Drayton McLane: Dr. Dobson, do you ever think about the wooden racket you started playing with? And then you look at these beautiful, beautiful metal rackets they have today. But I remember when my parents gave me my first good tennis racket, and I still have it. If you look at it, I showed it to my kids, and they said, you've got to be kidding. But you remember how proud we were when we had one of those?

Dr. James Dobson: I had one Jack Kramer after another.

Drayton McLane: Yeah, that was mine.

Dr. James Dobson: Let me tell you something else. When I was a senior in high school down in the valley below you down there, Jack Kramer and the pros, the best in the world, came to Harlingen, Texas, and I was a ball boy for them. And that included Jack Kramer, Pancho Gonzalez, Don Budge, and Frank Sedgman. And that was a thrill of my life, I can tell you.

Drayton McLane: Well, what brought them down to that far down in Texas?

Dr. James Dobson: Well, in those days, they didn't have professional tournaments. Boy, I sound like Father Time here, but they would come to local schools, and they put a canvas in the gymnasium and then sold tickets to it. So the best players in the world, as you know, Jack Kramer was number one.

Drayton McLane: Oh, and he was, I never played against him, but I just saw him play. He was so physically strong. That was my impression. And like you, you know, to have a Jack Kramer racket, wooden racket, that meant you were really special.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, it isn't fair with these big rackets that they have today. They get to hit the ball so much harder. And we were handicapped with what we were using. But do you still play?

Drayton McLane: I did until about five or six years ago, and just scheduling and finding people that I used to play with kind of dropped out. Do you experience that?

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, I miss it, and I miss basketball too.

Drayton McLane: Sure, and so just people my age have quit playing, and then I found about the only ones I could find to play with were 20 years younger or younger, and they were so good. They could hit the ball so hard. It wasn't fun like it did when you were playing people close to your age.

Dr. James Dobson: I had an opportunity to hit with Andre Agassi at one point. I certainly didn't play him, but we just hit the ball back and forth. And he hit that ball so hard it actually knocked a racket out of my hand.

Drayton McLane: I can imagine.

Dr. James Dobson: And I asked him how difficult that was, how much energy it took, and he said not much at all. It's all timing and wrist. I never got the hang of it. You've had quite a career in and around sports. You in 2014 were inducted into the Texas Hall of Fame, and you went to Baylor University and received a meritorious achievement award from them. I have a whole list of your accomplishments. You went to Michigan State. Well, I went to the University of Southern California, and the Trojans are better than the Baylor Bears. I don't know how to tell you that, but I don't want to mess up a good one relationship here.

Drayton McLane: Well, we'll have to see if we can get them scheduled to play each other. That'd be a lot of fun.

Dr. James Dobson: You are also still involved with the Astros, I understand. Somebody told me that in the seventh inning, you always left your box and walked around the stadium talking to people. Why'd you do that?

Drayton McLane: Well, I'm not sure where you get all that information, but it's accurate. I owned the Astros for 19 years from 1993 to 2011, and you play 82 home games every year. So I would go to about 70 or 75. I thought if I was responsible and owned the team that I should be there and support the players and show the fans that I cared as much as they did. So I had good seats, my wife and I and our family, right behind home plate. But at the middle of the second inning, I would get up and I would wander all over the ballpark. And, you know, usually you had 35 to 50,000 people there so I would just wander around sit down and talk to people and get their impressions and see how the food service was, how the food was and are we good hosts. Do they feel that we greeted them? I felt when, you know, 40,000 people came to a game, it's like inviting 40,000 people to your home. And I said to all of our employees, if you invited someone to your home, you would be out in front of the house greeting them when they got out of their car and escorted them in the house, and you would still be there when they got ready to go home, and you'd walk out with them. And I said, we should treat people the same way. So I spent from the middle of the second inning to the middle of the seventh inning wandering around talking to the people. And learning, and I'd take a lot of our employees and our executives with me, and I said, "Let's just go talk to these people and see what they think and how do they think we're doing a good job." And it's amazing what you can learn when you just talk to your employees and your customers and see how things are going.

Dr. James Dobson: That really reflects the fact that you're a people person, aren't you? You like people.

Drayton McLane: Oh, that's the greatest joy in life. The greatest joy in life is to interact with people.

Dr. James Dobson: And you learn a lot from them as you see.

Drayton McLane: Oh, absolutely. I know what I know. I need to know what everybody else is thinking. Dr. Dobson and, you and I had a meeting in San Antonio. I felt like a little kid going to the circus. That your reputation and I had listened to you so often on the radio and then had certainly read books. I've heard so many ministers speak so highly of what you do in our society. And so I was just so excited the morning I got to meet you in San Antonio and just be around you. So, you know, we can learn so much from other people.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, we spent an hour and a half together that day, and there was an instant connection. I appreciated your values, what you stood for, and the people that you have helped in many ways. As the clock ticks down here, I want to ask you a more important question. Are you concerned about where America is at this time and the changes that have been occurring?

Drayton McLane: Absolutely, Dr. Dobson. I look back and when I grew up in a small rural town, we never locked our houses. We felt safe. I remember in the summertime, I would get on my bicycle on Saturday morning and ride to see my friends all over town. And I might leave at nine o'clock in the morning and not come back to five or six in the afternoon and my mother would never be concerned about me. You can't do that today as you did. Our society is too complicated. There's so much crime, values have declined and we don't have high Christian principles in the way we live our lives.

Dr. James Dobson: You know, I experienced the same thing. We'd pack a lunch and leave early in the morning and ride out to a lake that was about 12 miles away and stay all day and my mother never worried about us. You just didn't worry about kids in those days. But now you can't even let an eight-year-old go to a public restroom without being accompanied because something can happen to them in there. Are you concerned about the institution of the family and what's happening to it?

Drayton McLane: Oh, absolutely, of the family and schools. And both my sons went to public school, and their children are going to public school. But you see the issues in school, the crime that's in school, and the compromises that teachers and the leaders in school systems, public schools, have to make. And then just the compromise you have to make in business today that violates your Christian principles. And it just really saddens you to see that.

Dr. James Dobson: And the breakup of marriages, a lot of people are not even bothering to get married. And marriage is in decline, and it's under attack now, as you know. What we're doing to babies, the press has been fixated for good reason with what's happening in Planned Parenthood, killing babies and selling their body parts. It just feels to me like that morally this country is on a steep decline.

Drayton McLane: Well, Dr. Dobson, I had a mentor. I've had... one of the things my father taught me in business that I always have two or three mentors that are not related to you or directly in your business and you spend time with them each year and let them tell you what they see in you. And I had a mentor one time said, the most dangerous time for an individual or a business is when he's succeeding. And he said, we get spoiled with success. And he said, two things happen. You start inhaling all those nice things people say about you and you start believing them. And then you compromise, you don't work and achieve and have the high standards that you had previously. So I just think in America, we have had, so God has blessed us and given us such great success. We are compromising our Christian principles rather than working harder to live a more godly life.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, we've been talking to Drayton McLane. He is a man whom I have known for a short time, but I've already come to respect and love him. I appreciate his love for Jesus Christ and how he brings that into his business. I know that many people in Texas and elsewhere know what I'm talking about because his reputation has been established for a long, long time. Drayton, thank you for

taking the time to talk to us today. You're a very busy man. And I hope our paths cross down in Texas someplace. You know, the red carpet is out for you to visit us here at Family Talk.

Drayton McLane: I'm going to take you up on your offer to come by and see you and I certainly enjoyed this conversation today.

Roger Marsh: The most dangerous time for an individual or a businessman is when he is succeeding. What a fitting reminder to close today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. On today's broadcast, we featured a classic conversation between Dr. James Dobson and his dear friend, businessman Drayton McLane. Now, if you missed any part of today's program or if you'd like to share it with a friend, go to drjamesdobson.org. You know, Dr. Dobson devoted his life to preserving and promoting the institution of the family and the biblical principles upon which it is based. That mission continues today through the work of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, and it is carried forward by like you. We invite you to partner with us so that his timeless wisdom keeps reaching families for generations to come. To make a secure donation, visit our website at drjamesdobson.org. If it's easier, just type in those initials jdfi.org. Or if you prefer, you can make a tax-deductible donation over the phone. You can call a member of our constituent care team when you dial 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh, and from all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, thanks so much for listening to Family Talk today. Be sure to join us again next time right here for another 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.

Dr. James Dobson: What's the primary reason for failure in high school?

Roger Marsh: With today's Dr. Dobson Minute, here's Dr. James Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: The answer is not laziness or poor study skills. No, the main reason for failure in high school is disorganization. Now, some children are just better organized than others, but it's a skill that can be learned. Educational expert Cheri Fuller says it's a skill that should be taught early, even before students reach junior high school. Starting in the middle school years, students may have as many as five teachers with different textbooks, workbooks, handouts, and assignments from each classroom subject. It takes a good degree of organization to keep them all straight and to put assignments in priority. This kind of exposure and training can help a flighty adolescent become a self-disciplined and self-propelled individual in time. Organization, it's one very important key to success in school.

Roger Marsh: For more information on this topic, visit drdobsonminute.org.