



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: A Picture of Life – Part 2

Guest(s): Ron DiCianni

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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 Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and today we're going to hear part two of a conversation featuring Dr. Dobson and his guest artist Ron DiCianni. Ron's very life is a testament to God's mercy. His mother was facing desperate circumstances and came within seconds of ending her pregnancy. But God spoke to her heart, and she walked out of that clinic. And then the son that she nearly lost would grow up to become one of the most celebrated Christian artists of all time. A graduate of the American Academy of Art in Chicago, Ron DiCianni is widely known for his painting called "Spiritual Warfare" and also his deep love for the Lord, which moved him to use his gift to help save the lives of countless unborn children. You're going to hear how that took place in just a moment. So let's join Dr. James Dobson right now, along with his special guest, Ron DiCianni, to introduce today's edition of Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: Ron, on our program last time, you told the story of how your mother got pregnant and their financial circumstances were such. And the house, the little apartment they were living in was so crowded that your mother didn't feel that they could have a baby. And so she decided to have you aborted and came within 20 seconds of doing it before the Lord spoke to her and she got up and walked out of the clinic where she was about to get the abortion. From there, talk about your early childhood. How did you begin to realize you had very unusual artistic talent.

Ron DiCianni: Sure. I grew up with a sense of destiny. My mom did not hide the fact from me that she had planned to abort me.

Dr. James Dobson: What did that make you feel like?

Ron DiCianni: Well, I got to be honest with you. You would think that it would have been a horrific thought. Like, wow, you didn't want me or whatever. But I lived in our family long enough to see the hardship on my dad and all the pressure on my parents.

Dr. James Dobson: So you understood it?

Ron DiCianni: I understood not sympathetically, but I understood how one in dire circumstances could rationalize that this might be an okay thing to do. But the truth of it is, as my good friend Ray Comfort said to me when I was on his television program, he said, people do not abort their baby or put that baby in a dumpster because they're in hard circumstances. They do that because they have no regard for life. That's why they do that. Now, my mom at the time didn't have a regard for life. All she knew is that she was in some bad circumstances and said it would be easier to do this, never giving thought to the fact that God had a plan for me. Do you want to hear something really interesting? My mom was super creative and artistic. So I was her clone. She would have killed part of herself because I was the one that grew up out of all of us in the family as taking after her and my mom became my biggest cheerleader when she became a Christian and I wanted to be an artist; she was my biggest cheerleader.

Dr. James Dobson: How old were you?

Ron DiCianni: At that time probably 16, 17. When I would go to school, I literally would fail chemistry and the school would come to me and say, we're not going to let you take art anymore because that's the only thing you're doing good in. And I would say to them, honestly, I'm not goofing around in chemistry. I just can't even spell it. I don't know what it means and I can't get it. But in art class, I know what to do. And everybody was blown away by what I could do in art class. But see, way back then, there was no premium put on visuals. Little did they know how visuals were going to become the method of talking today. You know, William Barclay, the great theologian once said that it used to be by way of the book that we learned. Now it's through the eye gate. And, you know, I don't mean any offense. If you're teaching Sunday school and everybody's sleeping, it's probably not your gift. If you're singing and everybody's covering up their ears, it's probably not your gift. And to say, well, I have a good heart and that's why they've got me up there. No, Scripture doesn't say that. Scripture says it's got to be your gift.

Ron DiCianni: You gave us a catalog of your Christian works. I mean, you have done many, many things before the Lord put His hands on you and said, I've got other work for you to do. One of the paintings that is represented in this catalog is a painting of Simeon. And many people don't know who he was. Tell us.

Ron DiCianni: The painting is called "Simeon's Moment." It is derived from Luke 2. If you'll remember from Scripture, there was an elderly man that waited in the corridor of the Jewish temple waiting for Messiah. And God said to him that your eyes will get to see the Messiah and you won't die until you get to see Him.

Dr. James Dobson: He'd been waiting all of his life for it.

Ron DiCianni: He'd been waiting all of his life. And I had the opportunity to do a book with Kent Hughes, a terrific writer, who sat down with me and said, let me tell you, you're about to do a painting called "Simeon's Moment." Let me tell you what

happened with Simeon is that every time a couple came in to have their child blessed by Simeon, his first thought was to jump up and, is it Him? And the Holy Spirit would say, no, no. And one day, in walks Mary and Joseph with Jesus. And Simeon's heart leaps. And tradition says, this is not written in Scripture, but tradition says that Simeon ran across the whole courtyard when the Holy Spirit told him, there He is, and grabbed the baby out of their arms and glorified God.

Dr. James Dobson: Wouldn't you like to have been there?

Ron DiCianni: Oh, my gosh. That's every Christian's dream is to have been at that moment to hold Christ in your arms. But you know what? If you're a mom or dad, you're going to get to hold one made in the image of Christ, your own baby, who is as precious as Christ who was held by Mary and Joseph. And, you know, Jerry Jenkins and I did a book called *Holding Heaven* where I showed Joseph holding Jesus in his arms and tear running down his cheek at the enormity of holding Christ in his arms because of all that he knew about him. Well, all I know is when they put Grant and Warren in our arms, my wife, Pat, and I, as I'm sure, Danae and Ryan were for you and Shirley, it takes your breath away. That baby that may seem to be a big inconvenience will be the light of your life if you allow him or her to live.

Dr. James Dobson: No question about it.

Ron DiCianni: And when they put that baby in your arms, you will say, Thank you, God. Thank you, God. So for anybody who might be listening today wondering if this short nine months is worth it, I will not only tell you it is, I will guarantee it is. And all you have to know is that God has a plan for that baby. Please don't rob that baby or the world of the gift they're going to be to this world. We need that baby.

Dr. James Dobson: As a psychologist and a person with a Ph.D. in child development, what was so amazing to me about parenthood is how the mental humanness descends upon a baby. And you can hardly believe as you watch it happen that this complexity, I mean, the human brain is more complex than anything known in the universe. And to see these youngsters develop a sense of humor and can learn to teach then learn the language.

Ron DiCianni: Logic.

Dr. James Dobson: Oh, my goodness. And to think that that Planned Parenthood that is situated just two blocks from my house breaks my heart every day when I drive past there and I see all these cars out there and I know what's going on inside.

Ron DiCianni: It's cloaked under some kind of law that says we could do what we want with our bodies and with our children inside of our bodies. Well who said that? God never said that. Is there a higher law than God? I think not. So we're being deceived and one of the things that is bothering me so much is that it's become almost accepted and commonplace in our society. Abortion happens. That's

crazy. That's crazy that we allow this to take place under the auspices of your right to choose. Really? So is it my right to kick you in the stomach because there's really no baby in there? How ridiculous would that be? That is not in the realm of possibility.

Dr. James Dobson: I would ask, what is the difference? Between a baby who resides in the uterus and a baby who's born? There is a short eight-inch trip down the birth canal for this baby to be born. You kill the child then, and it's murder. But when you can't see him or her, then it's fair game.

Ron DiCianni: It's convenient. What we don't see isn't happening. We can rationalize that. When that baby comes out and gives that big old cry and lets the world know, I'm here, I've arrived, and I've got some business to do, that's the same baby that was inside of your belly. And do you want to know in that Scripture that I quoted in Jeremiah, modern translations say, before I formed you in the womb. You know what the older translations say? Before I formed you in the belly. In the belly. So when you see somebody with that round belly, there's a baby in there. There's not a thing in there. There's not a lifeless entity. There's a baby that God is growing inside of you.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, Ron, when we talk in this way, we're always mindful of the woman out there who has aborted her baby. And there's still a sense of guilt. You never really get away from that. But the compassion that you have for your mother who almost aborted you is a testimony to all of us. We have to have compassion for the woman who did this thing. God can forgive any sin.

Ron DiCianni: Yes. All of us make mistakes. You know, I've made my share. And if there's people out there, which we know there are, who have aborted children, there isn't anything we can go back to do. But from this point forward... We can change the system.

Dr. James Dobson: There will be many people listening to us today who didn't hear the first program last time. And I want to take just a second to say what I said then, that there is a painting called "Spiritual Warfare" that shows a child asleep in the bed. And the father is praying over that child. He's kneeling next to him. This is Ron's painting. And in the window behind the father are two angels who are—one of them represents goodness and the other evil, and they're fighting for the soul of this child that is sleeping. And the print of that painting has sold more copies than any other print.

Ron DiCianni: Contemporary, yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Contemporary. Yeah. And Shirley and I have that print. Hanging in our bedroom. It's been there for 20 years and I see it every day. Because that's my heart. Praying even now for my kids and my grandchildren. Because there is spiritual warfare. And now in our culture, there's spiritual darkness out there.

Roger Marsh: You're listening to Family Talk, and I'm Roger Marsh. Right now, Dr. James Dobson is in conversation with his guest, artist Ron DiCianni. So far, you've heard him talk about his painting called "Spiritual Warfare." And now he turns to a newer work called "Before I Formed You," a portrait of God's own hand reaching into the womb. There's a lot of spiritual symbolism packed into that image, and Ron's about to walk us through it. So let's rejoin the conversation right now.

Ron DiCianni: My good friend, Ray Comfort, who a lot of you know from Way of the Master, Ray called me one day and he said, I know your story. Could you do something visually for pro-life? So after praying, God gave me the image of literally the verse in Jeremiah that said, God said to Jeremiah, before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. So there's no difference today. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. So God knows your baby. It just happened to be that my daughter-in-law, Amanda, was pregnant with our fourth grandchild. And I use models in my work. And so I asked her, can I take a picture of your belly, you know, very modestly clothed? I have the hand of Christ touching what is as at first, you just see a pregnant belly, but on closer inspection, you can actually see the baby inside of her tummy being touched by the hand of Christ.

Dr. James Dobson: That's powerful, Ron.

Ron DiCianni: Whoever's listening today, if you're pregnant, your baby is formed by the very hand of God. It isn't there by just biological means. It was planned, created, and formed by God, just like I was.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, you have a foundation by that same title.

Ron DiCianni: Yes. It's called the Before I Formed You Foundation. We're a non-profit. You're better at all these words. What is that, a 501c3? Hey, look, I'm just an artist. I'm not one of those guys. My son does all that stuff. But literally, our aim is to go beyond the existing channels of you know, the law in the sense of, well, let's all just have a day where we commiserate about how many people have been aborted. Let's do something proactive and not just be reactive. Let's do something proactive. And I know that what are some of the old axioms in our world that a picture is worth a thousand words? I'll never forget, Max Lucado told me one day he said. And I'm telling Adam, so I'm sure I'll get an email when I get home. But he said to me, "Ron, I don't remember anything in Sunday school. I don't remember anything. But one day, the teacher brought in a painting of Holman Hunt's Christ Knocking at the Door. He said, I looked down, there was no doorknob, which meant you had to let Christ in from the inside. I remembered it. To this day, I remembered it." That's how powerful visuals are. So we created something that is, I hope well done. I did it as best I know how to do. And I know from the response that we're getting from literally all around the world that people are saying, I need this to remind me of the sanctity of life. This is a celebration painting. It's not a painting where you're going to look at it and go, oh my gosh, this is horrible to think about. It's one that you're going to celebrate the sanctity of life. We'd like to see it in every crisis pregnancy center.

Because, you know, when the girls go into the crisis pregnancy center, it doesn't mean they've made a decision not to have an abortion. They're just getting information. So they're walking in the door and they're saying, I need to be convinced to go through with this. And we've already had people who've written us and said, I took one look at this and that's all I needed to see. That's what we're trying to do. Call it a revolution in its own way, but I want to take any means we can to give babies a chance to live. If God planted those babies in your womb, your responsibility is not to say no thanks. It's to give that baby a chance to live. And if we can visually encourage you, visually remind you, and the next generation coming up, let's get them into their schools. Let's get them into the OB offices. Let's get them into legislators' offices, who behind the scenes are creating all these laws, making it just great to go out and have an abortion. Let's have some of them say, your painting made me think about getting behind those crazy laws. Let's hit them at a place where as human beings, there's no way they're going to be able to resist this. I've seen it happen.

Dr. James Dobson: We've been talking to Ron DiCianni, who is one of the best-loved artists in the country, whose heart is dedicated to the Lord and to the cause of righteousness, and it shows up in his paintings. I am really excited about having you here, Ron, and I appreciate you. I sense your passion for the Lord, and I understand where it comes from now. Thank you for being our guest and for allowing us to explore your heart because that's what we've been talking about.

Ron DiCianni: Well, I have a few heroes in this life. My mom, my dad, greatest dad ever. You're in there because you've affected my life deeply and I've watched your life. We've known each other for quite a while now. You know, not everybody in our circle is what you think they are. But you are. My friends like Max Lucado and so many others, they are. Behind the scenes, I've seen them. They are. The Jerry Jenkinsees and Randy Elkhorns and those people. When I get to work with them, I see men of God. And that's what I see when I look at your life.

Dr. James Dobson: You're very kind. You know what I wish? My dad died 35 years ago.

Ron DiCianni: My goodness.

Dr. James Dobson: And he was an artist. He would have loved you.

Ron DiCianni: He was good. He was good. I've seen some of his stuff. He was good. He could have taught me a thing or two.

Dr. James Dobson: You and he would have had a lot to talk about.

Ron DiCianni: We would have had a blast. Well, I don't think I got second best, but I appreciate you saying that. But I got to tell you that we only get a short time to tread this sod that we walk on. And we need to make the most of it. When I think that during our time together just now 182 babies were aborted, I can't wrap my mind about that. Do you know that one out of seven OBs will now perform abortions? Do you know that one-fourth, 25% of all pregnancies end in

abortion? Do you know evangelicals are more likely to get an abortion than Catholics are?

Dr. James Dobson: Really?

Ron DiCianni: Yeah. Yeah. And so that's why we formed this. And, you know, we have about 100,000 places we've identified where this painting needs to go. We need patrons to come behind us and say, "I know you guys aren't making money on it, so we'll help you get this out there." We need them to step up because, you see, God gave me a talent. He might have given somebody else money.

Dr. James Dobson: We're going to be off the air.

Ron DiCianni: Okay.

Dr. James Dobson: You're wound up, brother. I love it.

Ron DiCianni: Sorry, I'm wound up. Sorry.

Dr. James Dobson: You've wound us up.

Ron DiCianni: I'm sorry. Well, thank you. I'm honored to be here, and God bless you.

Dr. James Dobson: Thank you, my friend.

Roger Marsh: Well, what a gift it is to see how one life, nearly ended before it began, became a testimony that has stirred hearts and minds for decades. You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's conversation with his good friend Ron DiCianni here on Family Talk. And near the end of the broadcast, you heard Ron DiCianni plead with us to come alongside his mission, using his God-given talent to defend the lives of unborn children. One way you can do so is by sharing Ron's story, and this two-part program is available on our website. You can pass it along to a friend when you visit drjamesdobson.org. You know, Ron's story is a reminder that no life is an accident. Every child, wanted or unexpected, carries a purpose known to God long before they draw their first breath. That conviction sits at the center of everything we do here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. We're committed to defending the sanctity of human life, to preserving and promoting the family and the biblical principles upon which it is based, and also introducing as many people as possible to the gospel of Jesus Christ. But we cannot carry that message alone. When you donate to this ministry here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, you help send stories like Ron DiCianni into homes and hearts all across the country. Every gift, no matter the size, helps us continue standing for life and carrying Dr. Dobson's timeless wisdom forward. Now, you can give a gift securely online when you go to drjamesdobson.org. If it's easier, just type in those four initials, jdfi.org. You can also speak with a member of our constituent care team by phone. That number is 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Or if you prefer, you can send your tax-deductible donation 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.

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 joining us 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: A teacher who can control a class without being oppressive or mean is almost always loved by her students.

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

Dr. James Dobson: One reason is that there is clearly safety in order. Children, especially elementary kids, can be vicious with one another, and they feel good about having a strong teacher who's in charge. Second, children love justice. They admire the teacher who can enforce an equitable legal system. Third, children admire stricter teachers because chaos is nerve-wracking. Screaming and hitting and wiggling are fun for about 10 minutes. Then the confusion begins to get tiresome and irritating. When you look at the secret of success behind a championship football team, a magnificent orchestra, or a successful business, one of the principal ingredients is invariably firm discipline.

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