



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: America's Enduring Legacy of Hope

Guest(s): Dr. William Bennett

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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. As we observe Memorial Day today, and honor those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our nation, it's fitting to reflect on America's unique place in world history. Our founding was indeed providential and throughout our history, brave Americans have defended liberty both at home and abroad. On today's edition of Family Talk, Dr. Dobson welcomes author and speaker, Dr. William Bennett, who served as secretary of education under President Ronald Reagan, and later as director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy under President George H.W. Bush. Dr. Bennett is also a prolific author whose books include *The Book of Virtues*, *Tried by Fire* and the focus of today's discussion, *America: The Last Best Hope*. During this fascinating conversation Dr. Dobson and Dr. Bennett will explore America's remarkable founding, the character of leaders like George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, and why our country continues to be a beacon of hope for millions all around the world. They'll also discuss the challenges facing our republic, and why preserving our heritage matters so deeply. On this day of remembrance, we reflect not only on those who gave their lives in service, but also on the enduring ideals they protected. Let's listen in now for this inspiring discussion on America's enduring legacy of hope here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Dr. James Dobson: I don't ever remember starting an interview with an author by saying, what's the significance of that title? But in this case, I want you to express it.

Dr. William Bennett: It's Lincoln's words, of course, as so many of our words about our country are Lincoln's or Washington's. He said in a speech, a talk and a message he sent to Congress, he said, "We shall nobly save or meanly lose this last best hope of earth." The words are beautiful as they often are with Lincoln. What perhaps is more interesting is when he said it. Well, he said, "We were the last best hope of earth," after the battle of Antietam, sometimes called the battle of Sharpsburg. The bloodiest day in American history, still. 21,000 casualties,

22,000 casualties at that battle in Maryland. Not far from where I live. I drive out there sometimes on in the early morning and look at the battle scene.

It was touch and go. It wasn't clear whether this nation would survive. It wasn't clear whether the Union would prevail. Lincoln was assailed on many, many sides. I've sent a number of messages to the White House, along with the book about reading about Lincoln during his time. His cabinet was not with him. The man who was running the war for him, General McClellan, people thought he might try to take control of the government in military coup.

Dr. James Dobson: In fact, if the North had lost that battle, Lincoln would have probably been thrown out of office.

Dr. William Bennett: They were very close to Washington and there was that chance. There was the chance at Gettysburg. You're exactly right. And it was touch and go. It was not at all clear that we would survive. But Lincoln said at the time, "We are the last best hope of earth." And it struck me in writing this book at this time, that it's right to say it again. If you are sitting in some God forsaken place in the world, if you have no hope, if there is a military coming over the hill with a flag, what flag do you want it to be? Despite what our critics say, people all over the world want it to be the United States, the flag of the United States. It means deliverance.

Dr. James Dobson: I came to Washington to hear you speak when you were Secretary of Education and you used a phrase then that you've referenced in this book again, you call it the gates test.

Dr. William Bennett: The gates test, yeah.

Dr. James Dobson: Remember that day?

Dr. William Bennett: Yes, I do.

Dr. James Dobson: You spoke for us. Explain what the gates test is.

Dr. William Bennett: I refer to it in the book. You're absolutely right. When I was Secretary of Education, I taught at a 120 schools around the country. And a young woman in San Diego said, "You obviously love the country," she said, "I'm not so sure about it, but why do you think it's such a great place?" I said, "Well, I'll give you a reading list," but I said, "I'll give you a short answer." I said, "Every country has its gates," I said, "and when a country raises its gates, you want to find out about the country, you look to see which way people run. Do they run in or do they run out?" I said, "When we raise our gates, people run in. When we don't raise our gates, people run in, which is why we're talking about this immigration issue. Other nations raise their gates and people run out." I said, "That's a very good test of what a country is." And from the beginning, people have fled to this country, have looked to this country.

Dr. James Dobson: Given that historical fact and the way it is today, isn't it amazing that there's such a sizable number of people in the media and in the liberal community that despise this country and its freedoms? And they're doing everything they can to undermine it.

Dr. William Bennett: It's never been this bad in terms of the media. I wouldn't say that presidents haven't had it this hard. They have. Lincoln was one. But in terms of the media, it has never been like this. David McCullough says that if Washington or Lincoln had had to face the press and the press reports that you have now, these things wouldn't have been won. If the reports of the battles, Washington lost more battles than any general in modern history. Luckily he won some big ones and he pulled some very good surprises off, but that if it had been reported, the discouragement would have been so great.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you made reference a minute ago to the fact that this great experiment in liberty that Lincoln spoke about is not a foregone conclusion.

Dr. William Bennett: Absolutely.

Dr. James Dobson: We could lose it.

Dr. William Bennett: We could lose it.

Dr. James Dobson: And it's probably in as much danger right now as it has ever been, including the Revolutionary War.

Dr. William Bennett: I think it's a very serious time. And the question I have is whether we have the cultural resolve, the moral resolve. No doubt about our soldiers, no doubt about our military, their ability to get the job done and the kind of people we have. But whether we have it culturally, whether we will call things by their right name, whether we will endure. The founders, and I talk about this in the book, hoped that we could survive for a 100, a 150 years. That was their hope because places of this size, democracies, republics just don't have a history of surviving very long. We've set a record, but the question is Jim, as you say, whether we will endure. I do think, and I want to just hit the thing again, the cliché about those who don't study history are condemned to repeat it.

Dr. James Dobson: Still true.

Dr. William Bennett: But one of the parts of the book that people have picked up on is our war with the Barbary pirates in 1800.

Dr. James Dobson: That's with Muslims.

Dr. William Bennett: It was our first war with Muslims. You know what they were doing? They were kidnapping people, holding them for ransom. And at the time this was going on, there were about a million and a half Christians being held as slaves by Muslims,

Muslim warlords. And they were taking our ships and then making us pay ransom. And Jefferson, and I'm kind of on and off Jefferson, yes, no. I got to tell you on this one he said, "We're not going to take this. We're not going to let these people get away with this." And John Adams, he said, "I'm not sure you can fight these people." "Why?" He said, "I think if you fight these people, you will be fighting them forever." This is 1800. 1800. Well, 200 years later, the fight still lives on.

Dr. James Dobson: Because of the religious fanaticism that values death. Now I'm not implying that all Muslims are violent. I'm sure of what I've been told that the vast majority are peace loving people who would do us no harm. But a small percentage of a big number is still a very big number. And there are, I'm told 1.2 billion Muslims on the face of the earth. And if 10% of them believe the Quran instructs them to kill infidels, which would include us, that is 120 million people who would give their lives to destroy us. But let's assume that figure is grossly overstated. If only 4% are fighting the jihad or the holy war, that still means 48 million people want to kill us. That's a threat of enormous proportions when you start talking about nuclear bombs and other weapons of mass destruction.

Dr. William Bennett: You're exactly right. That's 48 million. We saw what 19 could do on 9/11. Bernard Lewis, who was the great scholar of Islam, retired professor at Princeton. I was with him not long ago. I asked him the exact question. I said, "Of the 1.2 billion." He said, "10 to 15%." That gets it up to 200 million. It's a whatever, whether it's 50 or 200.

Dr. James Dobson: That explains why you say our national life is threatened.

Dr. William Bennett: That's right. And then we look at the numbers out of Great Britain, where they did those polls after the July 7th killings in London and 13% of Muslims in London said they supported the suicide bombers. 13% of 2.2 million. That's a significant number of people.

Dr. James Dobson: Now, you know what? I hadn't planned for us to talk about all this on this program, because your book is not just on the threat to this nation. It's the great heritage of this nation.

Dr. William Bennett: It's the stories.

Dr. James Dobson: And the stories. And we've got a whole lot more to talk about here.

Roger Marsh: You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and an interview featuring Dr. Dobson and author and speaker, Dr. William Bennett. They've been discussing America's rich heritage and storied legacy. Since its founding, the United States have been assemble against oppression and a bastion of hope for the oppressed, but our nation is not without its flaws. Let's join Dr. Dobson and his friend, Bill Bennett once again, as they tackle a few of the darker parts of our nation's history.

Dr. James Dobson: Of course, we're imperfect. We have some very embarrassing components to our history, slavery and some of what we did to Native Americans. That was evil. That was wrong. But there's also an awful lot that's good here. It's less than perfect, but find me a better one.

Dr. William Bennett: That's right. And the amazing thing about America is, and I tell the story. I tell the stories of the wicked things, the atrocities in an unblinking way. But the amazing thing about this country is the capacity to recognize a problem and to deal with it. Sometimes it takes us too long as it did with slavery and emancipation, but we get there. But this capacity to set it right, self-renewal. One of the figures in the book, a giant figure for me.

Dr. James Dobson: Frederick Douglass.

Dr. William Bennett: Frederick. You knew I was going to do that.

Dr. James Dobson: I knew you were going to say that.

Dr. William Bennett: He just is just larger than life. And I love his quotes. He meets Lincoln and then someone says, "You met the president," this Black man goes in and meets the president. He says, "Yes." He says, "What did you think of the president?" He said, "Well, he's intelligent, but he's got some growing to do." This guy was, I guess, if you are a slave and you gain your freedom one day by... when you're the man they had on the plantation there in eastern Maryland, who was there as the slave breaker, this is the guy who's to break the will of a slave. Anybody who shows any gumption. And when Douglass turns on him and pins him, he realizes with the help of a couple other people too. He realizes then that there's only one way he can go and that's all out and strong. And so then he goes, he goes to Boston. He goes north. But he remains a very strong supporter of Lincoln, a very strong Republican. This is just historical fact. I'm not advocating.

Dr. James Dobson: This is not a political editorial.

Dr. William Bennett: No, I understand a political editorial. And again, his way of presenting things and his impatience for justice and his talk with a number of his friends were very active to get the vote for women. And he said, "Fine. Important. But us first. They're not lynching you, they're lynching us. We're first, you're second." They wanted him to put things on equal plane. He said, "One thing at a time."

Dr. James Dobson: Didn't he say something about the Constitution had not one word in it that authorized slavery.

Dr. William Bennett: That's exactly right.

Dr. James Dobson: But it had the foundations within it that ended slavery.

Dr. William Bennett: Exactly right. He said that and in saying that, he said something which was then later picked up on by Martin Luther King, who goes back as Douglass did and as Lincoln did to the founding documents, to the Constitution. But even more, and of course this is a big debate among the scholars, which is the documents, Constitution, the Declaration? I'm a Declaration man for a couple of reasons. "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal and endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights." And Douglass goes back and says, "That's the foundation. That's the foundation of our freedom." But he is a fabulous, fabulous character. All these wonderful stories.

Dr. James Dobson: We are jumping around chronologically here, Bill, just because that's the way the conversation has unfolded. But you spend a lot of time talking about George Washington here. He was not just the father of our country and the first president, but the character of that man comes through. Explain why.

Dr. William Bennett: My favorite story, it's a commonplace, but I love the story. It's about character. At the end of the war, a lot of the soldiers wanted to march on Philadelphia to get their money and Washington was trying to discourage them, not a good way to start the government, which is to hold the Congress at bayonet point. I understand the temptation. I've been there a couple times, but it's not a good idea. He's trying to persuade them. And another one of his things is he was not a great public speaker, but he remembered something that someone had given him, a slip of paper. He pulled it out of one pocket. The other pocket, he pulled his glasses out and his men had never seen him with his spectacles and he noticed that. He heard the crowd go silent. And he said, "I see that you notice that I wear glasses." He said, "Well, it was to be I have not only grown old and gray, I've become almost blind in the service of my country."

That simple unrehearsed spontaneous statement and everyone started to cry. They were reminded of who this man was and what he had done for the country. The respect for him, it's one of the ironies I talk about, was so great that several of the founders pointed out that we almost blew it. We almost went back to monarchy because the regard for him was so great, the first proposal for his title, we had to rename things. We had to rename who our commander in chief would be. The first title John Adams came up with, it was His Glorious Highness, the President of the United States and Glorious Protector of Our Liberties. And William Maclay from Pennsylvania said, "What's with Adams? Doesn't he understand what we fought this thing for? It's to get rid of all that stuff." But such was the regard for Washington.

Dr. James Dobson: The reason that I consider him to be such a hero is right along this point, that almost no one in human experience gives up power willingly. It is intoxicating. And once you have it, you don't want to let it go. And he could have been king, but he served two terms as president and would not accept even a third term.

Dr. William Bennett: Exactly right.

Dr. James Dobson: And you talk about greatness, that really speaks to me.

Dr. William Bennett: The world was watching and King George said, it was this moment, whether he would give up his power said, "If he gives up his power, as he said he will, he will be the greatest man in the world." And he did it.

Dr. James Dobson: Did he say that?

Dr. William Bennett: And he did it without a moment's hesitation.

Dr. James Dobson: Another of your heroes in this book, this is just one story right after another that give you a sense of pride and dignity, not arrogant pride, but thankfulness and gratefulness for the leaders that the Lord gave us. And especially when we consider what was going on in the rest of the world at that time. The French Revolution resulted in all this killing in the streets. And then of course the British had had their civil war. And here, right in the middle of that is this ultimate statement of a representative form of government. A government of the people, by the people and for the people. That makes me want to cheer.

Dr. William Bennett: You bet. You should.

Dr. James Dobson: And it makes me want to defend this country and it makes me angry when I hear the media assaulting what we have stood for.

Dr. William Bennett: I know.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, let's press on. Bill, let's turn our attention now to our 26th president, Theodore Roosevelt, who really had just about everything going for him when he was younger.

Dr. William Bennett: Yes, had the silver spoon, had all that Harvard, but didn't let it hold them back. A guy just full of energy and drive for his country. Full of patriotism. When he was police commissioner in New York, he walked the beat at night. He walked in the middle of the night to find out if everybody was doing their job. He was an extraordinary human being who had a deep and just pervasive sense of right and wrong. When he went West out into the Dakotas where he developed his great love of America, these two guys had stolen something from him. He went out, he captured them, brought them back, both of them back.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, his style was to speak softly and carry a big stick.

Dr. William Bennett: Sure was. It sure was.

Dr. James Dobson: Still kind of makes sense. Doesn't it?

Dr. William Bennett: Yes. We had an American, Perdicaris, who was kidnapped by Raisuli, who's this Barbary chieftain. And some question about whether he was an American citizen. Roosevelt assumed he was an American citizen. And this chieftain over there in Morocco kidnaps him. And Roosevelt gets a wire back and he sends a

wire back immediately. He said, "Perdicaris alive or Raisuli dead." Don't mess with the American citizen. I want my citizen back or you're dead. I will send the U.S. military with all its might. I come back to what I was saying, how impressive our entrance into Afghanistan was and the beginnings of Iraq and where American military power is used, when it's presented, it needs to be unambiguously powerful.

Dr. James Dobson: It should not be sparing.

Dr. William Bennett: It shouldn't be sparing.

Dr. James Dobson: If you're going to go in there, get it over with and get out.

Dr. William Bennett: And I think our willingness to exercise military power in a way that is unambiguous is in some ways a measure of our internal confidence. Now if I'm sounding bloodthirsty to the audience, I just want to point out, remind people, the last seven times that the United States military has been deployed, it has been deployed to save Muslims. To save Muslims. Just go through it. Iraq.

Dr. James Dobson: Kosovo.

Dr. William Bennett: Kosovo.

Dr. James Dobson: Somalia.

Dr. William Bennett: Afghanistan, Somalia. Exactly right. You just keep going and we have done this and done it and have liberated in the last seven deployments, 50 million or more Muslims.

Dr. James Dobson: I am proud of the work that you've done with this book, Bill. I do hope that our listeners and especially their older kids will read this book.

Dr. William Bennett: Well, it's not a heavy tone. It's the great story of America. And the story is full of romance and drama and comedy and humor and characters like you wouldn't believe. This is a place, not only where people have dreams, but the dreams actually come true. They really do come true.

Dr. James Dobson: You have called it in fact, the second greatest story ever told.

Dr. William Bennett: Absolutely. That's right.

Dr. James Dobson: After the great story of Christ's coming.

Dr. William Bennett: That's correct.

Dr. James Dobson: This is the greatest political story.

Dr. William Bennett: It is the greatest story. People come here and hope. And one of the reasons I wrote this book was to correct the revisionist stuff. I told you the last time I was here, there was a history book, they now changed it, that defined the Puritans as people of the 17th century who took long trips. People from England who took, because they didn't want to get into the religion thing because that's not appropriate to talk about in schools, don't you understand?

Dr. James Dobson: Bologna. The title of the book is *America: The Last Best Hope, Volume I: From the Age of Discovery to a World at War*, by Dr. William J. Bennett. Have the best days gone forever for this nation?

Dr. William Bennett: I don't think so. I think our greatest days are still ahead of us because the influence now on the world that we have had. The founders hoped we'd last a 150 years. We've beaten that record by a bunch and now we move on. But this is the challenge. The challenge that is before us is as great as anything we've ever faced.

Roger Marsh: Liberty is never guaranteed. It must be cherished, defended, and passed on to future generations. You're listening to a special edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and a thought-provoking journey through America's heritage featuring Dr. Dobson and his special guest, Dr. William Bennett. Now if today's program sparked your interest in learning more about American history, I encourage you to visit drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. There you can listen again to the program; you can also share this conversation with friends and that's also where you'll find a link for Dr. Bennett's book called *America: The Last Best Hope*. It's the perfect resource for anyone who wants to better understand the exceptional journey of the American experiment. Again you'll find all this information and more when you go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk, or when you access this information on the Family Talk app.

Here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we are committed to upholding the principles upon which America was founded. Part of our mission is promoting religious freedom, respect for our American founding, and righteousness in our culture. In a time when many seek to rewrite or diminish our nation's exceptional story, we stand firm in defending the values and ideals that have made America a beacon of hope. Your prayers and financial support enable us to continue sharing broadcasts like this one that celebrate our heritage and inspire Americans to preserve the blessings of liberty for future generations. When you partner with us, you're helping us to ensure that the timeless truths of our nation's founding remain alive in the hearts of Americans. 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 to send your donation through the mail, 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 you can write JDFI for short. P.O. Box 39000 Colorado Springs, Colorado, 80949.

Well I'm Roger Marsh and on behalf of Dr. Dobson and all of us here at the JDFI, thanks so much for making us a part of your day. 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.

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