



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Mike Tennant: A Humble Servant for the Lord – Part 2

Guest(s): Heather Salvesen

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- 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, I'm Roger Marsh and welcome back to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk for day two of Gary Bauer's conversation with Heather Salvesen as they discuss her father, Mike Tennant. On our last edition of Family Talk, we heard how Mike pioneered a revolutionary approach to community development, one that puts families first and creates neighborhoods where people truly do life together. On today's Family Talk broadcast, Heather continues sharing her father's inspiring story, including how his faith in Jesus Christ compels him to use his success to serve others through the Tennant Charitable Fund. His generosity and humility remind us that it's not about what we achieve, but how we steward what God entrusts to us. That's coming up on today's edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. And now here's your host for this broadcast, Gary Bauer.
- Gary Bauer: Well, folks, welcome back to Family Talk for day two with Heather Salvesen about her wonderful father who has done so much for the kingdom and has a wonderful record of achievement in his business, but has just left and is leaving an incredible mark on the people of the Northwest. Heather, let's get right into it.
- Heather Salvesen: Well, hello again, Gary. It's great to be back with you. Thank you for having me.
- Gary Bauer: Our pleasure. When I was doing a little bit of research of my own, getting ready for our conversation, out of curiosity, I put in...it's Northwest Crossing is the name, right?
- Heather Salvesen: Correct.
- Gary Bauer: Yeah. I put it in and it's really amazing because there were a number of homes. It's a large community. There were a number of homes that were on the market. But what struck me was that every one of them was unique and different. And that is so different from so much of the development we see even today. I mean, I sometimes now fly into Denver on my way to Colorado Springs and it's amazing how that whole area can just be miles of communities where every house looks like it was made with a cookie cutter. Nothing's

different about them or unique about them. This really did look like a special place. I can see why it won awards.

Heather Salvesen: Indeed, indeed. I'm proud to have lived in Northwest Crossing myself for the last 20 years. My husband's a builder and we've moved every two years, but we've always stayed in Northwest Crossing. And I'm very proud to have been here from ground zero to see all the amazing families and communities that it's blessed. We now have two elementary schools, a middle school, a high school, several churches. It's really a gift to be a part of it and to see how it's blessed so many individuals, including ones that wouldn't normally be able to afford a neighborhood that offers what Northwest Crossing offers to its inhabitants. And one of the things my dad did that he ... I know that he would say the Lord put it on his heart to do this, is he created a strip of eight brand-new townhomes called Helping Hand Housing that was a part of Northwest Crossing.

And it was a nonprofit that he hired me to manage that served single moms and their children. Hardworking, single moms that wouldn't have been able to afford a place in a neighborhood like this, got to enjoy subsidized housing at a quarter of market rent for a year. And all the utilities were covered. He paid for all the utilities and allowed eight single moms and their children to move into these brand-new town homes. And the amount of dignity that it restored to these young women who had been ostracized to the outskirts of town and apartment complexes, trying to get back on their feet, trying to have a fresh start from whatever compromising situation that they had come from, they got to look around and feel not less than, but feel equal and feel deserving of the beauty and the health and the safety and the flourishing neighborhood that they got to raise their children in for that time.

And I met with them weekly to do goal setting and budgeting and just help them create a plan to get back on their feet, get them plugged into churches, help them get their job applications in. And it was a really rewarding thing to be a part of. And it was all my dad's vision and heart to include some affordable housing, which neighbors did push back on. People love the idea of helping those in need, but they don't always want it in their backyard. And so my dad was resolute in maintaining that there would be a place for everyone to call Northwest Crossing home.

Gary Bauer: Yeah. The "not in my backyard" is a well-known phenomenon. People have one view when it's theoretical. It's a different view when it's their neighborhood. That's a wonderful story, Heather. We're pro-life. I know your family is pro-life, but women today, for decades, they have crisis pregnancies and sometimes they choose to bring the child to term and other times they don't. When a woman chooses life and she doesn't have a man who's responsible for the situation she's in alongside of her, it really behooves us as followers of Jesus Christ to come alongside of those women who chose life.

And your father set a tremendous example in doing that. But he regularly helped people, didn't he? Maybe they couldn't afford the complete down

payment or perhaps they were dealing with medical issues. As I recall, he often would make a special effort to help those people access the American dream of home ownership.

Heather Salvesen: He did, Gary. He did. I mean, how much time do you have? Because that is a long, long list. But a couple things. And really, it wasn't until I was much older that I would hear stories about what my dad did to help people. He didn't come home from work and share with us kids what he was doing to help others. We knew he was generous. We knew he had a heart for the Lord. He was raising us according to truth and Scripture in the church, very strong Christian conservative household, but he definitely and continues to be one of the most humble man I've ever, ever met. I mean, Gary, the man is a multimillionaire and he walks around in jeans and tennis shoes and a t-shirt that he probably should have changed two days ago and is the most unpretentious human being. Don't tell him I said that.

He's so humble and unpretentious. And so it's been a joy, Gary, as I have relocated back to my hometown where I've now been married for 17 years and have now raised my three children or am raising my three children back in my hometown. I run into people all the time, Gary, at church, at the grocery store, at the gym. "Are you Mike Tennant's daughter?" There's no greater honor that I can feel than for somebody to stop me and say, either, "Are you Olivia or Leif or Sylvie's mom or are you Mike Tennant's daughter?" Because I never cease to be humbled and amazed at the stories that I hear about things that my dad did when he was building his real estate company and his developing company, he accumulated several commercial properties, Gary, back in the late '90s and blessed a lot of local churches and nonprofits with either free or subsidized rent.

He gave the building to the Teen Challenge program to get their ministry started. He allowed churches to have free commercial rent space when they lost their lease. He discounted rent for families going through medical hardships. The list goes on and on and on. And I know that he lived by the verse, "Do not let your right hand know what your left hand is doing." And he never wanted the credit. He never wanted the glory for the things that he did and the ways that he freely gave to people in need throughout the community. They could have been perfect strangers, but if he had the opportunity to help them with generosity and give them either discounted rent or subsidized housing or a place for their church to meet for free so that they could keep their congregation attending regularly, he did it without hesitation. And that really kind of led to then the beginning of his charitable fund, which then only exploded the reaches of his generosity from just being a real estate and developing to much, much broader giving. And that continues to just be a legacy gift to us kids and now his grandchildren.

Gary Bauer: Well, let's talk a little bit about the fund and what the goals are because you are playing a major role in that and directing it and overseeing it. And what are some of the things that you all have if you want to talk about specifics of invest in? You've been real partners with the James Dobson Family Institute and we're

very grateful for that and appreciative of your investment in us. But you've invested in many great causes by taking the profits that your dad was blessed by God to be able to make and then returning those to the kingdom by all the various things you've been supporting.

Heather Salvesen: Well, yes, Gary. And first of all, it's an honor to partner with JDFI. And Dr. Dobson was truly one I know my dad would consider Dr. Dobson to be his everyday hero indeed and someone he really regarded and looked up to as a family man, a husband, a patriot, someone who really had boots on the ground in so many tangible ways to help restore our nation. And my dad just, if he could have only given to one nonprofit, I know that it would have been Dr. Dobson's. And yes, it is probably the honor of my lifetime to get to be involved in the Tennant Charitable Fund. My dad and mom formed this charitable fund in 1998. It has now grown tremendously just by gifting the annual interest of a lot of his wise investments. We are able to now give nearly half a million dollars away per year.

And my dad has high ambitions to, of course, live long enough to see it give away well over a million dollars each year. And he does have a lot of wonderful guidelines as to how and to whom these funds are gifted. His alignment is very Scripturally based. And so as far as how the Bible tells us to give, the charitable fund is my parents' legacy and their belief that God blessed them abundantly so that they could bless others. They believe that it's God's money and the fund strives to be a good, good steward. They're a compassionate family and team guided by the life and values of Mike Tennant, the founder, and the faith that he has in God and His Word. That's an excerpt from our mission statement. And something my dad wrote himself was, "My life purpose isn't success and business, but to raise my children and grandchildren, to know, love, and follow God's plan for their life so that we can all hear, 'well done, my good and faithful servant.'"

His vision, Gary, is to serve the poor, the downtrodden, the orphans, the widows, the homeless, the marginalized individuals in our society with this fund. He has a very, very big heart.

Gary Bauer: The lease of these, right?

Heather Salvesen: Yes, to the least of these. Exactly. In fact, that verse is one of the verses, we have about six Scriptures that outline biblical giving as to just always make sure that our compass of giving and our heart and our intention with where God's money ultimately is going is back into His people and how He tells us to give in the Bible. And so that is one of those to who, how we treat the least of them is what we do for Christ and what a joy it is to give. I mean, my dad is one of the most cheerful givers that I've ever met. He always says, "You can't outgive God, Heather. You can't outgive God." And of course it is better to give than to receive are all some of his coined phrases that he lives his life by and that he operates this charitable fund out of.

And he has a huge heart for prison ministry, Gary. I mean, in addition to the homeless and orphans and widows of our community and in our world, he gives globally as well. But he's always had a heart for the inmates knowing that many of them grew up fatherless and without that example and the love, the faith and the leadership that he had, and that certainly my sisters and I have because of my dad. And so the marginalized population of our society that a lot of people have given up on and the inmates are definitely some of those. So he's partnered for years with a nonprofit called Broken Shackles that does prison ministry. And lately, Gary, because of just the climate of our nation and of our culture and just the worldview that has become so tainted and has gone away so much from biblical view, my dad has really shifted a lot of his giving in recent years to Christian non-profits that are working to restore America, such as, of course, JDFI, his favorite beloved top of the list, but these ministries that are helping to just bring the urgency to Christians for their part in being patriots and being believers that take a bold and unapologetic stand and truth to impact the world for Christ.

And so he is really wanting to give to those. And a lot of his inspiration and giving to those truly came from attending several years' worth of those incredible conferences that you yourself, of course, spoke at and were a part of. And Gary, I apologize if I get this wrong. It was either you or Dr. Dobson that said it. And I guess if I'm going to mistake you with somebody, Dr. Dobson wouldn't be the worst person to confuse you with. But either you or Dr. Dobson, in one of the years that we attended the gathering, Gary said, "Revivals don't start on a national level, do they? They start at a local level. They start in the home. They start in the home, and they start with the family, and then they start in the church, and then in the city, and then in the nation, and then in the world. It starts in the home."

And Dr. Dobson believed in that so much. And Gary, my dad, he's lived that out. He's lived out his ministry for revival purposes by starting with his children and his wife, loving them well and faithfully, working hard without complaining, and raising us up in the ways of the Lord, the way that Dr. Dobson has always instructed. And now I have the honor and privilege of partnering with my husband to do the same for our children. And we are. We are seeing revival the way that Dr. Dobson envisioned we would and that Charlie envisioned we would. And that you have spoken at the gathering, that it is now or never. The time is now and we've never needed Christ more. We've never needed Him more in our schools, in our churches. We've never needed bold leaders more and to be able to use the charitable fund to further those efforts and to bring revival about in our nation, I know my dad would say the greatest calling that he has.

Gary Bauer: Yeah. I loved how you described that. It must have been me that said it.

Heather Salvesen: I think it must have been.

Gary Bauer:

Yeah, no. I actually think it probably was Dr. Dobson, but I know you know American history. All of our founders believe that only a moral people could remain free. If you don't have virtuous people, then you need a huge government to control the passions of people. So America having a revival is really essential, I think, to our future. There was a big awakening before the American Revolution, and some historians think without it, there wouldn't have been an American revolution. There was another one in the years before the Civil War, and it led to the abolition movement. So that was a key point in America. And I know Dr. Dobson felt too that we're at one of those moments now that we've got so many problems that are due to us moving away from the God of the Bible, who is the author of our liberty. And if we can't rediscover that, America's going to be really in deep trouble. So because of people like Dr. Dobson and people like Charlie Kirk and men and women like your mom and dad who so generously support a lot of efforts, those things are all, and those people are all so necessary for America's future, which reminds me, Heather, when did your father first come across Dr. Dobson? And did you hear the Dobson name in your house while you were being raised?

Heather Salvesen:

I'm grinning at you sheepishly, Gary, because I know exactly when my dad came across Dr. Dobson, and it was when he picked up his own copy of *The Strong Willed Child* when I was probably about 13 years old. So maybe it's my doing, but I won't take that much credit. No, my dad, again, it was a big deal that my dad grew up very, very staunchly Catholic and then did kind of convert to at first a four square Christian faith. And now we are all attending a Baptist church here in Central Oregon that we just love, a Bible preaching church. But my dad, when he became a Christian, it was a whole new world to him. And he and my mom did start having children right away. And so he knew the importance of raising his children with faith, but knew that it wasn't going to be the Catholic faith.

And so Dr. Dobson was the voice on the radio back then that people like my parents who were relatively new to the Christian faith of having a personal relationship with Christ, he was a beacon to so many like my parents and his voice on the radio really helped give so much wisdom and guidance and counsel on how to raise your children, how to discipline your children, how to love your wife, how to deepen and be accountable for your own faith as a man and a husband. And so my dad, who's a voracious reader, and again, Gary, I don't know how back in the time before Audible, I mean, I'm an Uber driver for my children. I go through like three audibles a week easily. But my dad back then, I don't know how he had time to read, but he was just always either reading Scripture or reading a book of Dr. Dobson's, Norman Vincent Peele.

I mean, he couldn't get enough of literature. He loved the book Exodus. He's read that many, many times, but he read a lot of Dr. Dobson's literature and then he listened on the radio. And then as the three of us girls got older, anytime we were in the car, we'd be listening to Adventures in Odyssey.

I have almost all the episodes memorized. And now my children who are really into Father Gilbert can recite all the plot lines of that series and just love those.

We listen to those as a family. And so I mean, talk about a legacy gift that Dobson had the insight to have his radio broadcast include these valuable timeless teachings, right? I mean, not to liken too much to scripture, but my goodness, rooted in truth, because it is rooted in Scripture, makes it timeless and makes it always relevant. So what Dr. Dobson was teaching my parents in the early 80s about being godly parents and a godly husband and a godly wife and raising your children in the way they should go has translated beautifully to my husband and I and how we're raising our children. The truth doesn't change. It's all based on Scripture. And Dobson had a way of making it relevant.

I mean, I remember the shopping cart analogy. Do you remember that? The squeaky wheel, the shopping cart when you're raising children, things like that that he said with just a little bit of tongue in cheek. I mean, he had a slightly cheeky way of helping us again to not take ourselves too seriously, but to always, again, that compass realignment that he provided and he's providing today, even after his passing through his radio broadcast, through the vision and hard work of so many like you, it all points to Christ. That's what my dad would want. That's what he would say. I mean, when Jenanne asked if my dad would be a guest on your show and do this interview with you himself, he humbly and very politely declined, which I don't know how you tell Jenanne no.

Gary Bauer: We have not been able to figure out how to do that on our own.

Heather Salvesen: He told her no. And Gary, we kind of thought that was that. Dad, he didn't feel comfortable sharing his story or talking about himself. He didn't feel worthy. He thought there were so many other men more qualified than himself to have this honored invitation to do this interview with you. And Jenanne really persisted and said, "No, I really feel like Dr. Dobson would want your story to be told." And so it really is all through Christ, all through Christ, through His glory, through His goodness, through His faithfulness, through His generosity in my dad's life, that we're even in the position that we're in to be able to bless others and to do this kingdom work.

Gary Bauer: Well, Heather, this has been a fascinating conversation about your dad. We feel like everybody that we ask to agree to be one of our everyday heroes, we feel like they all deserve it, but there's just no question that your father brings glory to God in everything that he does. And you do a fantastic job representing your dad and explaining what's motivated him through his life. I think this time together we've had with you is going to be some of the best shows we do in this year. We're grateful for the ministry that your whole family has been called to. And we're certainly grateful for you coming alongside of Dr. Dobson and the James Dobson Family Institute. It's been a pleasure to have this time with you. And we've all got to keep praying and working that America will have that revival we all want and that we can truly be one nation under God again.

Heather Salvesen: Amen, Gary. Amen. Well, thank you so, so much for just including me today and taking the time to highlight the valuable kingdom work that my dad is doing. We're staying put in Oregon because this is where the fight is and we're doing

our work here to bring the kingdom a little closer. And I just am super honored to get to share my dad's amazing story.

Gary Bauer: Well, God bless you, Heather, and your family, and goodbye everybody from the James Dobson's Family Talk.

Roger Marsh: True generosity is not measured just by the size of the gift, but by the heart behind it. Mike Tennant understands that every blessing we receive is really an opportunity to bless others. You've been listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk featuring Gary Bauer's conversation with Heather Salvesen about her father, Mike Tennant's remarkable journey of faith and service. Stories like Mike Tennant's truly inspire us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. They show what's possible when faith moves from Sunday morning into everyday life, and that's exactly what we're working to help families do. Through daily broadcasts like the one you just heard, we are bringing biblical wisdom into homes all across America, offering practical guidance for marriage, parenting, and navigating cultural challenges with conviction. We are championing the sanctity of human life, defending religious freedom, and calling this nation back to the principles that honor God and strengthen families.

These broadcasts reach millions of listeners every month, but they only exist because friends like you choose to invest in this mission and your financial support today helps us continue broadcasting biblical truth and practical wisdom to families who need it most. When you donate, you are standing with us to defend the values that matter most, protecting life, preserving religious freedom, and equipping the next generation to live out their faith with courage. To make a secure donation, visit us at drjamesdobson.org or go to our new site at jdfi.net. You can also call a member of our constituent care team when you dial 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. And remember, you can also send your donation through the U.S. mail. Our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, PO 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 just use the initials JDFI for short. P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 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 right here for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you can still trust, for the family you love.

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