



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Written in Heaven – Part 1

Guest(s): Joe and Tamara Battaglia

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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, welcome to another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you can still trust for the family you love. I'm Roger Marsh, and today we are going to get into a new resource talking with a couple of friends of our ministry who have a fantastic love story to share. And it's chronicled loosely, well, somewhat, in a brand-new book called *Written in Heaven: His Story, Our Lives*. Joined today on the broadcast by Tamara Hester Battaglia and her husband, Joe Battaglia. Tamara is the principal writer and editor of this brand-new book. But basically, it's a book that centers on the idea that our lives are part of a divine plan that was shaped before we were even born and how embracing that truth has changed the way a lot of people are looking at their own story. Joe, Tamara, welcome to Dr. James Dobson Family Talk broadcast. I know Dr. Dobson would love to be sitting here in this chair if he weren't with the Lord right now because he loves, loves, love stories like yours. So thank you for being with us today.

Joe Battaglia: Well, thank you.

Tamara Battaglia: Thanks for having us.

Roger Marsh: Okay. Your love story is sweet. And a little inside information. I kind of knew it was in the works because Joe and I had had conversation about this after Lisa and I married. And I'm so thrilled that now it's coming to fruition in this format here too. But I'm not going to let Joe's mic work first. Tamara, will you please share with us, kind of give us a 35,000 foot view, how you and Joe met and fell in love and got married, it's really a sweet story in and of itself. Before we get into the nuts and bolts of the book, talk about that for a moment with us, because it's one of those, it sounds like a Hollywood script, to be honest with you.

Tamara Battaglia: The backstory is I was divorced and then I was married 24 years and then I was single 17 years. I had not planned on finding romance, but God had a different story for me. I watched Kathie Lee Gifford on the *Today* show back in the day, and I saw where she was going to be at the Ryman with Nicole C. Mullen.

Roger Marsh: Oh, nice.

Tamara Battaglia: They had written this beautiful song called "The God Who Sees," and it is a beautiful, beautiful song. So I purchased two tickets to the Ryman. And then I went online and was looking at who else was going to be singing that evening. And another event popped up for the night before, and it was a dinner. After I purchased the ticket, they called me. The event planner called me and asked, how did I get this ticket? And I said, I don't know. I was online. And she said, okay, well, thank you. And thank you for buying the ticket. I didn't think anything of it. I invited my best friend to go with me. She was unable to go with me. And then I asked my sister if she could go with me. So my sister and I go to this event in Nashville for the dinner. And I'll let Joe pick it up from here.

Roger Marsh: Is this where Joe came in and swept you off your feet at this point? That's what I'm sensing.

Tamara Battaglia: No, not really. Not yet.

Roger Marsh: Not yet. Okay.

Tamara Battaglia: Not yet.

Joe Battaglia: Still on her feet after she met me, but I was producing that event for Kathy Lee. She's been a longtime friend. And this was at an event in Nashville that Tammy has alluded to. And so I bring Kath to the event, bring her to the stage door entry. And the gentleman who was in charge of it opens the door, brings her in, shuts the door on my face. I said, that's OK. I'll just wait online like everybody else. And so I'm online and I just talked to Tamara's sister, who was just standing there and likes to talk to everybody, I find out. And so that's when I met her. She walked over to be with her sister. And then afterward, everyone's leaving. I'm leaving. And I find them standing on the curb waiting for an Uber. And so my car was parked right there. And I asked Tammy, can I drive you guys back to your hotel? And she says...

Tamara Battaglia: No.

Roger Marsh: Wait cue the violins, the roses coming out, no? Oh no.

Joe Battaglia: No, she said no, and I again ask her you can just cancel your Uber. It'll be okay and she emphatically says again...

Tamara Battaglia: No. And the reason why is because we had one minute, one minute for the Uber to come. I didn't want to cancel on them and them show up. And then I didn't want to have to pay extra.

Roger Marsh: Pay the fee, sure.

Tamara Battaglia: Yeah. But I also, I felt bad that they were going to show up and then I had canceled it right then. But that one minute changed our life.

Roger Marsh: Wow.

Joe Battaglia: And so in a Holy Spirit-led moment, or just my New Jersey style, I reached over her right shoulder and canceled the Uber on her iPhone.

Roger Marsh: Oh, bold.

Joe Battaglia: That was very forward of me. I don't really act like that. And she turned around and looked at me incredulously. Right?

Tamara Battaglia: I don't recall that.

Joe Battaglia: I say, well, now you've got to accept my ride.

Roger Marsh: Yeah.

Joe Battaglia: She and her sister get in the car. And that's how we kind of met. And then the next night at the Ryman at the event, I was sitting there minding my own business. And then she was in front of me and basically asked me if I would sit next to her because she had an extra ticket for that event. And her sister, who was with her, decided to sit up front closer and was able to do that. So you just couldn't stay quiet. You had to turn around and talk to me.

Tamara Battaglia: Of course.

Joe Battaglia: Of course.

Roger Marsh: Another Holy Spirit moment. Now, it's interesting because Tamara talking about having gone through a divorce after 24 years of marriage. Joe, your story was a bit different. I mean, in terms of when you were thinking about, do I want to be in a relationship again? Because you had a much different story. Share that with us, if you will.

Joe Battaglia: Yes. Well, my wife of 37 years passed away a few years earlier in 2018. And so I had been a widower almost two years at that point when I met her. And so I wasn't necessarily looking and that's why it was just kind of fun the way all this transpired and how I met her and the things that happened as a result of us being together. So that's the short story of all that. And then you want to pick that up, Tammy, as to how we talked later?

Tamara Battaglia: Sure. That night, he said, if you're ever in Newark you know, or New Jersey, call me and I'll take you to dinner. And I said, well, I'm never in Jersey. I try to avoid Jersey.

Roger Marsh: I was going to say, that's not a destination that's popular for a lot of people.

Tamara Battaglia: No, it isn't.

Tamara Battaglia: No disrespect, Joe, but it's not like people are saying, I got to get to New York.

Joe Battaglia: I went there myself. Now, did you establish that you were a flight attendant for United?

Tamara Battaglia: No, not yet. I haven't.

Roger Marsh: I don't think we did. Well, this would be a good place to introduce that.

Tamara Battaglia: Well, I am a flight attendant for United. And so when he said that, I said, well, I don't normally stay in Newark. I usually go to Newark, I turn around and I go back to Houston because Houston was my base. For the next couple of weeks, when Joe flew United, he would text me and say, are you going to be on this plane, or what are we having for dinner? You know, just kind of silly conversations. And we went back and forth. And then I was at that time, I was on what they call reserve, which means I'm on 24-hour call. So I don't know where I'm going. I don't even know what time I'm leaving. And at the beginning of every month, I would pray about my schedule. And I would just give it to the Lord and ask Him to lead me and guide me and direct my path for that month. And I just kind of blurted out, "And if you want me to go to Newark and have a layover and meet Joe for dinner. Then, you know, make that happen."

I didn't really think too much about it when I prayed it. But six hours later on my schedule, I had a layover in Newark. And it probably had been around four years since I had had a layover in Newark. So that was very odd. I remember putting the phone down and I was bargaining with the Lord. I was like, well, you know, I know what I prayed, but changed my mind.

Roger Marsh: But do I really have to go to Newark?

Tamara Battaglia: Yeah.

Roger Marsh: Yeah, okay. And that's fair. I mean, when you put that out there and you're thinking, I'm going to put that out there because maybe it's going to happen, maybe it's not. And then when it does, all of a sudden there might be a little buyer's remorse saying, oh, am I really? I mean, nothing gets chill, but just saying, Lord, I asked for something, but now you're giving it to me. Oh my goodness. What do I do with that? That's a big responsibility.

Tamara Battaglia: It is. And it was six hours later. So I was like, okay, I think the Lord really wants this to happen. So I emailed Joe because it was in the middle of the night and just said, you know, I'm going to be in Newark tomorrow night. I have a very short layover, but if you want to have dinner, this is where I'm going to be. We landed that evening and it was snowing. So we were not able to meet. But he said, can I call you? And I said, sure. So he called me and it was like being in high school and talking to a boy again. And, you know, just awkward. It was an awkward 10 minutes. But I remembered something Joe had said that evening.

And he, you know, he said, "Well, we'll reschedule a dinner." We hung up. I didn't think anything really about the conversation. I just felt like, okay, God, I don't know what you're doing, but I felt like I did what you want me to do. And fast forward a few more weeks, and I am moving in with my daughter to be a nanny, sort of, and a flight attendant. She's getting ready to have a baby. And I'm packing up my things. And I just had a really, going through memories, kind of a very sad moment where I began to relive some of my memories. And I remembered what Joe said.

So I emailed him and I just said, here's my story. And I just really shared it with him very honestly. And he said, well, let me call you. So he called me that evening, and that evening was a completely different phone call. It was as if two old friends were talking, and he shared with me about his life and his story. I shared my life and my story, and it was just really like two old friends talking. And at the end of the phone call, he said, can I pray for you? And I said, of course. And he prayed this beautiful blessing over me.

Roger Marsh: Wow.

Tamara Battaglia: And I hung up the phone, and I knew that the Lord wanted me to receive what he had said. And I started writing it down. I wanted to recall it. And I couldn't remember all of it. Went to bed and I woke up and he had emailed me the blessing. You know, this is what I prayed for you. And he just wrote, you know, a beautiful paragraph of what he had said. And so that was really beautiful to me. And we decided to, after that, meet for dinner. And that's how it all began.

Roger Marsh: That's wild. Joe, what was it like for you? I mean, it sounds like it was very soul-searching and even a little gut-wrenching for Tamara to go through this. But you had a different story coming as a widower. What was it like for you to feel God saying, hey, you know what? I'm not done with your love story life yet.

Joe Battaglia: Well, I think anybody that's gone through that understands that it's a bit awkward at first. You don't want to assume anything. And you know me well enough to know that I'd like to have fun in just about every conversation I can get into.

Roger Marsh: That you do!

Joe Battaglia: Because there's always humor and joy about a lot of what we do. We're really privileged, you and I, Rog, to do the things that we have done and continue to do. And so you want to be careful that what you're doing is the right thing, particularly in this area. Right?

Roger Marsh: Yes.

Joe Battaglia: So it was a bit unusual. But the way all these things transpired, I think you, you take one step at a time and then you trust God for the next one. And he kept lining the steps up. And I think you understand that well enough. And I think

many people listening understand that as well. I don't want to see way down the road, you know. The word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. It's not a floodlight.

Roger Marsh: Amen.

Joe Battaglia: So God doesn't want us to know what is a mile down the road. He just wants to help us know what's tomorrow. And so everything kept lining up that this is someone I should continue to talk with. And when you go into that situation like that without expectations, it's a lot easier to handle without putting pressure on yourself. Or me putting pressure on Tammy, right? You just want to enjoy the relationship that God has put together. So I think it was kind of easy and casual, no expectations, and let's see what goes from there. And that was really my attitude.

Roger Marsh: Yeah. When did you know, both of you know, that marriage was the right thing, was the right next step for you? Because you could have stayed good friends. You know, very easily, you know, and you get to a certain season of life and say, I don't know if I can put myself out there again. Who is the first one to blink, if you will, saying, I really want this to happen?

Joe Battaglia: Well, I wonder if it so many things lined up after that. We met in L.A. in January after we met there in November and we went to dinner. And that was fun because I was there on business and Tammy was there visiting friends. We happened to be there at the same time.

Roger Marsh: Interesting. I didn't realize that was a coincidental connection again.

Joe Battaglia: That's another one.

Tamara Battaglia: My friends that were in L.A., they don't live in L.A. They actually had been there RVing. Her husband got very ill and they didn't have family there. So I was going out there to help them.

Roger Marsh: Interesting. Interesting. Just so happened.

Tamara Battaglia: Same week.

Roger Marsh: Yeah. Another holy coincidence. I love it. It's fantastic.

Joe Battaglia: Same week. Same days. So we had a fun time that evening at dinner. And then the next night, it was so fun, I couldn't wait to do it again. So we had two dinners. And so at that time, when she found out what I did, which was produce a lot of events, as you know, and I told her, well, I was the next one I was doing was at the Ark, Ken Ham's thing in Kentucky there.

Roger Marsh: Yes.

Joe Battaglia: And I had asked Todd Starnes to moderate for me, Janet Mefford, to be a guest and Kay Arthur. And she said, oh, I love Kay Arthur. She's been through Kay's material, all those *Precepts for Living*.

Roger Marsh: All those colored pencils. Yes.

Joe Battaglia: And so I said, well, you're the flight attendant. Here's when we're going to meet. Are you available? Fly in. I'll introduce you and you can hang out with us. And she did. She was able to meet and hang out with us and meet Kay and enjoy the time. And then I had to leave the following day to get back to work. But Ken was going to give everybody a personal tour of the Ark.

Roger Marsh: Nice.

Joe Battaglia: So she decided to stay to hang out with Kay. I left and I called her that weekend and said, well, how was it? And she said, oh, it was great. And I became really good friends with Jill Mahoney, Tim's wife. So they became instant pals, and Jill asked her to help her, if she could, at a conference they were doing and exhibiting patterns of evidence. And so Tammy says, well, yeah, I decided to do that. And I said, "Well, what's the name of the conference?" And she said, "It's called NRB. Have you ever heard of it?"

Roger Marsh: Oh, my goodness.

Joe Battaglia: Of course, I've been going to NRB since 1975.

Roger Marsh: I was going to say, can we just add here a little note to give Joe a pat on the back for receiving his 50-year award last year at the NRB convention? And we'll see him again. He's a hallowed figure at NRB. And people, literally the crowds of people clear in his passing when he walks by. There's so much reverence for Joe. So I'm enjoying the innocence of Tamara's question because it's just beautiful.

Joe Battaglia: And so I laughed. And I said, well, I've only been going there for 50 years. I'm on the board. And I guess I'm seeing you again. We had a great time because she would help Jill during the day at the booth. And then we would hang out in the evening. And so we'd be meeting and then friends of mine would walk by. Sherry Rigby, you know, the actress.

Roger Marsh: Oh, yes.

Joe Battaglia: Really dear friend.

Roger Marsh: And good director, too.

Joe Battaglia: A good director. And she, that was the first time she met Tammy. And then she pulled me aside and said, there's something going on here. And then Michelle Pillar walks by who's another dear friend.

Roger Marsh: Yes.

Joe Battaglia: She said the same thing. And then I was having dinner with Kim Crabill, a dear, dear friend who runs, you know, a national women's ministry. And I said, hey, Kim, I'd like to bring Tammy along. She's a friend. She would love to meet you, I'm sure. And so we had a great dinner. And then Kim took me aside as well and said, there's something going on here. And so I think the opportunity to hear from people who know you well.

Roger Marsh: Yes, yes.

Joe Battaglia: And who have really Holy Spirit lead ministries. And they know when God is moving and doing things.

Roger Marsh: Yes.

Joe Battaglia: And so they basically confirmed that. And then the final confirmation was at the banquet that night. You know, we have the banquet at the end of NRB.

Roger Marsh: The fancy formal one, yes.

Joe Battaglia: Right. We were sitting at the same table with Hank and Sheila Erwin.

Roger Marsh: Oh, my.

Joe Battaglia: Who I know because I've worked with Jon and Andy on all their movies. And so we sit down and Tammy sits next to Sheila and she says, oh, there's something here, as well. And then at the end, Lapine was emceeding that evening. And Bob and I, longtime friends, we worked together for the same broadcast company.

Roger Marsh: Sure.

Joe Battaglia: So Bob knows me extremely well. He knew Luann, my first wife. So Bob knows me really well. So I walk up with Tammy and say, hey, Bob, I'd like you to meet Tammy. And he looks at me with that look. I said, "Well, she's a friend." And he says, "Right. What is she really to you?" And so I had five confirmations. A conference that she was not supposed to be at that I had not set up.

Roger Marsh: And none of these people had spoken to each other either, right? Bob and they're all independently coming to you and saying, we're sensing something. I think that's good Holy Spirit confirmation.

Tamara Battaglia: And it was wonderful for me because seeing all these women be friends of his and genuinely caring about him and respecting him. It really helped me see him in a different light as well. He really is a very respected... he's a respected young man.

Roger Marsh: Yes, he is. Yes, he is. I was stunned last year when they said 50 years. That can't be, not Joe. I mean, he doesn't qualify for that. He's not old enough.

Joe Battaglia: Well, I was a child prodigy.

Roger Marsh: That's just right. You were.

Joe Battaglia: So anyway, you may remember that. The day after NRB ended that weekend was when the pandemic took a turn and everything got closed down. So Tammy wasn't flying at all. And I wasn't traveling anywhere at all either. So basically for the next four months, we talked to each other every day.

Roger Marsh: Wow.

Joe Battaglia: I went out for a walk at 3 p.m. every day because I really had nothing much to do. And she didn't have anything to do. So she'd go for a walk and we would talk for like an hour. And then at night, we just decided to FaceTime each other for another time to talk. And we grew really as good friends and finding out about each other and praying. And so it became very evident that something was going on here that we had not orchestrated. And it was time to decide whether to fish or cut bait.

Roger Marsh: Yes.

Joe Battaglia: And so the real test would be if she would meet my daughter and see what my daughter thought and my staff at my company.

Roger Marsh: Right.

Joe Battaglia: Because nobody knows me like them.

Roger Marsh: Exactly.

Joe Battaglia: And they would sense. So basically, she came to visit for a couple days, met my daughter who kind of liked her. And my daughter really didn't like me talking to any other.

Roger Marsh: I'll bet. No, seriously, that's real. I mean, as long as you and Luann were together, my goodness.

Joe Battaglia: Yeah.

Roger Marsh: That was a tough one to crack.

Joe Battaglia: And so and my staff loved it. I mean, when you meet Tammy, you just fall in love with her and you feel like.

Roger Marsh: Of course. Yeah.

Joe Battaglia: So my staff loved her. My daughter loved her. And then I went to visit her and her friends just really liked me as well.

Roger Marsh: Boy, isn't it something how God orchestrates the details of our lives right on down to a chance meeting at a banquet table? Joe and Tamara Battaglia's story is a beautiful reminder that when the Lord is at work, He rarely leaves us guessing. You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and part one of my conversation with Joe and Tamara Battaglia. And it's been such a joy to get to know this couple and hear how God brought them together. Now, if you missed any of today's program, or if you'd like to share it with a friend, simply go to drjamesdobson.org. While you're there, be sure to look for Tamara's new devotional book. It's called *Written in Heaven: His Story, Our Lives*. Again, for information on the book as well as the program, go to drjamesdobson.org.

You know, the mission here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute is a big one. We long to see families strengthened, marriages restored, and men and women introduced to the saving love of Jesus Christ. We stand for the sanctity of human life, for religious freedom, and for righteousness in a culture that desperately needs it. None of that, though, happens without friends like you praying with us and standing right alongside us in this battle. So today I want to personally invite you to partner with us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. When you give a gift of any amount, you help carry this message of hope into homes all across the country. And you can become part of our team by making a secure donation today. Online, go to drjamesdobson.org, or if it's easier, just type in those initials, jdfi.org. They're one and the same website. You can also call a member of our constituent care team. That number is 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825.

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 tune in again next time right here when Joe and Tamara Battaglia return to continue their discussion on their love story, which they believe was truly written in Heaven. That's coming up right here on the next edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, the voice you trust for the family you love.

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