



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: An Everyday Hero Reflecting on the Enduring Promise of America – Part 1

Guest(s): Dave Owen

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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.

Gary Bauer: Welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Gary Bauer, senior vice president of policy and culture here at JDFI. And I also host the Defending Faith, Family, and Freedom podcast. I hope you've been falling along with us in recent months. We've been having a number of shows where we highlighted everyday heroes. These are guests that come on and share their lives with us and the work that they're doing. But these are followers of Jesus Christ. People that everywhere they go bring the cross of Jesus with them and it informs them. It tells them what they need to do as they go through life's challenges. And we hope these stories of your fellow Americans will inspire you and also embolden you to share the gospel of Jesus in your own life.

Our guest today is one of those everyday heroes, Dave Owen. He has an extensive background. We could probably take all of our time together just going through his accomplishments, but those accomplishments touch on politics, on banking, real estate, technology. So I'll just give you a quick overview because I know Dave is going to have a lot of wisdom to share with us and a lot of great information about what he's learned over the years. Dave is the co-founder and vice chairman of Golden Waves Grain. And the mission of this new company is to restore America's bread supply chain. This is one of the big issues America's been dealing with. We found out during COVID that a lot of things we take for granted were not actually under our control. So I think this idea, this new company is something that we're going to really want to spend some time on.

Dave was the CEO and founder of a tech company that ended up being listed on what they call NASDAQ, the over-the-counter trading market. So that's a big deal. He was an athlete in his prime. He has a lot of honors for those things. So I guess today the term would be renaissance man, although I'm not sure everybody understands the meaning of that word anymore. One of the things that, Dave, showed up in your background was that you were a professional rodeo cowboy.

Dave Owen: Yes.

Gary Bauer: Now, James Dobson has done a gazillion radio shows and he probably has interviewed somebody representing every profession out there. I don't know if Jim ever interviewed a rodeo cowboy, so we'll talk a little bit about that. But rounding out Dave's life, and it's a very important part of it, is that Dave has been a Christian citizen, and he's excelled in public life.

He was a state senator and lieutenant governor of the state of Kansas. He served as chairman of US Senator Bob Dole's campaigns. And I know he's got some interesting stories to tell there. Dave and his wife, Laura, have four adult children, 11 grandchildren, five great grandchildren. So Dave, welcome to Family Talk. Been looking forward to this conversation for a number of weeks, and it's a pleasure to have you on the show.

Dave Owen: Thank you, Gary. It's a real honor to be with you.

Gary Bauer: We mentioned that bread company. Jesus said that he was the bread of life. And I know if Dr. Dobson was with us today, he would want to know about how you first accepted Jesus, the bread of life in your own life. So tell us a little bit about that. Did you grow up in a Christian home or how did you end up giving your life to Jesus?

Dave Owen: Yes. Well, I did. I was very fortunate. I grew up in a Christian home. We went to church three or four times a week. And when I was about 10 years old, we lived in Southeast Kansas and we went to church one day and just the spirit of the Lord just came over me and I went home and asked my mother about it and she told me how I accepted Jesus Christ in my life. And so I immediately asked to be baptized. And so I was baptized in that little church many years ago. Now, I will tell you that I was so young, I didn't remember some of it. And when my mother passed away, I was fortunate to be by her bedside. And she had such a terrific memory of her own conversion experience and her baptism. And I sat there and listened to her and she died just, I'm going to say maybe an hour later. But as I listened to that, it just compelled me to want to be baptized again so I would really remember what I did. So I did get re-baptized in our home church here in Lenexa Baptist Church.

Gary Bauer: What a wonderful story. I had a grandmother that took me to church. My parents were dealing with a number of issues, but it ended up when all was said and done that my father and I were baptized together. And that really sticks in my mind because he only started going to church because I think he and my mother felt a little guilty that only my grandmother was taking me. And when my grandmother passed away, they started going too. So it's amazing how Christ finds a way into our hearts.

Dave Owen: It definitely does. Just a few years ago, Laura and I took a group of college students to Israel in association with my leadership institute at Ottawa University. And I had the opportunity for the first time in my life to baptize about seven or eight college students in the Jordan River. So that was kind of full circle.

Gary Bauer: Yes. There's nothing like being baptized in the Jordan River. As you know, we read about it in the Bible. When you see it, it's not that dramatic of a place, but a lot of Christians, that has been the highlight of their life if they've been blessed enough to go to Israel. Dave, I mentioned the rodeo thing. I don't want to have it hanging out there and we end up finishing our conversation. I'm thinking, "Oh my goodness, I never asked him about the rodeo." How in the world did you get into that? Was it something you yearned to do and how long did you stay in it and what did it teach you, if anything?

Dave Owen: Well, it was a wonderful experience in my life. I've been a pretty good athlete most of my life, but when I was a little older, I met some folks from Oklahoma, Junior Garrison Willard Moody, who Junior was the world champion calf roper. And they came up to Kansas City to compete in the American Royal Rodeo. And I got introduced to them and they wanted to practice while they were there. So I knew a rodeo pen where we could go over and let them rope a few calves. And they just kind of got on me and said, "Why don't you try it?" So I did have a horse. I've ridden a lot in my life. I got on my horse, rigged him up to rope. And lo and behold, the first calf I ever chased, I got a rope around his neck and got him roped. So I was kind of hooked. And so I spent a lot of time in Oklahoma with Junior and particularly in Willard and just got proficient enough that I was able to get my professional rodeo cowboy card.

Gary Bauer: Wow.

Dave Owen: And I've roped at all the big rodeos all over the country, Cheyenne being probably the most prominent one, the daddy of them all, but usually would go out to California and start in Salinas or somewhere out there and just work my way back to Kansas. And they call that period in July Cowboy Christmas because you can literally rope three or four times a day if you can get to the rodeo. And so that's just what we would do and come on back across the country, rope in the Salt Palace and Salt Lake City and Cheyenne. And it was a wonderful time in my life.

Gary Bauer: So you were serious about it. I mean, was this a career path that you could have stayed on or?

Dave Owen: No. Well, I owned and operated banks at the time, so I had to take my vacation to go do it. I never intended to be a cowboy full-time, but I spent a lot of time at it and just had made terrific friends and some great experiences.

Gary Bauer: But it sounds like that would be a great experience and probably prepared you a little bit for the work you've done in government and politics. Roping those calves can be as trying to get a politician to do the right things these days.

Dave Owen: That's the truth.

Gary Bauer: So let me ask you a little bit about your family. When did you meet the love of your life, Laura? And can you tell us a little bit about that?

Dave Owen: Well, it was about 33, 34 years ago. And I was working at the time for a large investment bank headquartered in Little Rock. Stevens Inc., my friend Jack Stevens, who at the time was chairman of Augusta National, and we had met through politics. So Laura called in to the Little Rock office and had an idea, investment banking idea, and she was coming up to Kansas, so they told her to call me. So we got together and her idea had to do with military people being transferred all over the country and having to restart their banking relationships every time they did it. And so the idea was, can we come up with some program that would allow them to easily move around and not have such disruption in their financial affairs? And so that was the subject matter, but of course we hit it off and a few years later I asked her to marry me and thankfully she said, yes, the best decision to ever made in my life.

Gary Bauer: Yeah. Well, a lot of us can say that, Dave, that marrying our wives are the best thing that we've ever done, right?

Dave Owen: Exactly.

Gary Bauer: And you, as I said, when you started talking, you've got quite a family of 11 grandchildren, five great-grandchildren. Are those numbers up to date or?

Dave Owen: Yeah, that's pretty much it. I'm trying to think. I think we'll probably have a few more great grands, but thankfully seven of them live right here in our hometown, so we get to see them pretty often.

Gary Bauer: Yeah, that's fantastic. That's every father and grandfather's dream is to have them close by. So you married Laura and you built this great family, but all during this time, your faith was playing a major role in your life.

Dave Owen: Yes, that's correct. I've always been involved with church. Currently, it's the Lenexa Baptist Church in Lenexa, Kansas, but I've always been very active in my church. I've been a deacon in Southern Baptist Church. I have a Bible study that I lead every Friday morning with some very interesting guys here in town. And so yes, my relationship with Jesus Christ is very important to me.

Gary Bauer: Dave, there's something of a debate going on, both in the church and in the media too, about whether there's a revival building up. I think you would agree that in recent decades, there isn't much of a debate about the fact that there's been something of a falling away from the church, particularly among young people, but good people differ right now about whether there really is a revival or not. And of course, revivals happen in God's time, not ours. But what does your instinct tell you about ... Do you see something stirring out there as in the center of America in the bread basket and place like Kansas about the people returning to the church and to the Bible and to Jesus?

Dave Owen: Well, we're very fortunate in our particular church. It's a fast growing church. It's a large church. We probably 3000, 3500 members, but we have to constantly expand to different locations and start satellite churches because of the attendance. We just get overwhelmed with parking and space in the church. But directly to your question, what we see here is the young people, I'm going to say maybe 18 to 30, we've got a group that meets in our church on Wednesday evenings and it just overflows. The young people are turning to Jesus and it's amazing to watch.

Gary Bauer: Well, that's wonderful to hear. We tape these shows a little bit ahead of time from when they actually play, but one of the things that happened not long ago is this reading of the Bible out loud at the National Museum of the Bible. It was a wonderful idea and I think that God can use that in its own way, that people participated in it. I think there were 500 people, including the President of the United States that participated in it. And it's been shared that experience has been shared many, many times. Dr. Dobson and I, even in those latter times when he was dealing with illness, talked about the fact that we want America to be great, but America's not going to be great again unless it's godly again.

Dave Owen: Well, I certainly agree with that. And we had one of our members, close friend of Laura and mine, Rich Bott, who bought radio, participated in that. But prior to that event, we actually did the same thing in our local church. We just had our members read through the whole Bible, and that just concluded...

Gary Bauer: Really?

Dave Owen: Yes. And it was a lead up to what you're describing there, but Laura and I both participated in that as many, many of our friends.

Gary Bauer: That's fantastic. I had almost forgotten about that. There were Christian churches and Christian groups around America that have been sort of part of doing this leading up to the big event, and that would be a wonderful thing to make a tradition to repeat as often as possible. I think it was all the way when... I served in the Reagan administration, I think it was 1983, that Reagan declared 1983, the year of the Bible. I don't know. I bet now if we tried to do that, there'd be an argument about it in the Congress. There's some people that would be deeply offended by saying that the year was the year of the Bible. They've got all kinds of other weeks dedicated to all sorts of other things, but a week, a year devoted to the Bible, that would be a bridge too far for some of these characters, I'm afraid.

So Dave, I knew Senator Dole. Usually we were on the same side. Sometimes politics being what it is, we would have our little disagreements, but that was a different generation. Bob Dole was an American hero, sacrificed greatly for his country. Share with us, if you will, how you first crossed paths with him. And I believe you've got this wonderful story. I don't want to put you on the spot, but a lot of people, Bob Dole didn't brag about his sacrifice and a lot of people

weren't totally aware of it. So I think our audience would be interested in hearing that story too.

Dave Owen:

Well, Senator Dole and I met in 1968. I was running for the State Senate and he was running for the first time for the U.S. Senate. He was in a very tough race. He was running against Congressman Bill Roy, who was very, very well-known and really knew how to run a campaign. So as it got down to it, I had decided not to run for governor. I was lieutenant governor, decided not to run for governor. And the senator, we had met at my mother-in-law's house at that time because she asked us both to come for a coffee, and that's how we got acquainted and established a 20, 25 year relationship. But in any event, I took over his campaign. And when I went up to the campaign headquarters, looking through all of the documents and papers, just laying around on the desk, I found an article talking about his war experience.

People in Kansas didn't really know that. And so I came up with the idea of taking like a newspaper size piece of paper and reprinting the story. And the top of it was just the words guts and great big letters, G-U-T-S. And it certainly describes his experience. And so I got people who had motor homes and we had a whole fleet of them. We went all over the state of Kansas, up and down Main Street, handing those things out. And that's really when the people of Kansas really understood what he had gone through. And he was a tremendous athlete in his youth, KU athlete, played basketball for Fog Allen. It was a tremendous story and his body was just ruined by that event on the battlefield in the Poe Valley. So to overcome all that was terrific. And another kind of interesting side note is Senator Daniel Inouye from Hawaii was in the same rehab hospital with him.

Gary Bauer:

So yeah, the fact that two of those men would end up in the United States Senate is amazing. And of course, those two senators would have had their disagreements. One was a Democrat and Senator Dole was a Republican, but they did have that bond. And as I recall, there were things they were able to work together on, and they always respected each other because they both loved America enough to make that kind of sacrifice on the battlefield.

Dave Owen:

Definitely, definitely.

Gary Bauer:

You continued to work on Senator Dole's Senate campaigns, and were you involved in his effort, the presidential race too?

Dave Owen:

Up until the very last one, I was very central to all of those races. And matter of fact, probably my most intense campaign with him was when he was picked to run with Gerald Ford in '76. I was the chairman of the Kansas Republican Party, and of course, delegate to the convention and all that. But

I was very central. I was the assistant to Senator Bob Griffin on the floor. He was Ford's campaign chairman on the floor. So Senator Griffin came up and wanted

to ... Kansas was on the front row because of Dole so Senator Griffin wanted to be up there. So we sat side by side through the whole thing, but I was very instrumental in that. And then as the convention came to a close, Stu Spencer was up on the podium and we could just kind of look up at the podium and all of a sudden, I saw him doing this. And so he said, "Come up."

Gary Bauer: Motioning for you to come up.

Dave Owen: So I went through the door underneath the podium and went into backstage. I didn't come on the stage, but Stu said, "You seem to be the guy closest to Senator Dole. So we need you to run the vice presidential part of this campaign and be the liaison with the campaign and the President Ford." So that's what I did through that Ford-Dole campaign.

Gary Bauer: Wow. So Dave, one of the things Christians have been divided about, this used to drive Dr. Dobson crazy. And when he would get upset about it, he would call me and we'd get upset about it together, but we would run into pastors and just fellow believers who had convinced themselves that as Christians, they should stay out of government and out of politics because that was dirty and it wasn't a godly thing to do. And of course, if Christians all did that, then the people that were making all the decisions about governing us would not be the right people.

Dave Owen: Exactly.

Gary Bauer: Dr. Dobson for years and the James Dobson Family Institute today is committed to pushing the idea of Christian citizenship from everything I know about you, all of your opportunities in public life, your faith was always right there driving you, leading you in the decisions you made. So what would you say to our listeners that might be absent without leave in this battle that we're in in our country about whether we're going to remain one nation under God or not?

Dave Owen: Yeah. If we are going to remain one nation under God, Christians have got to get involved because we see it at every level. We see it here in our communities where Christians have ... Christians and hunters, this is something I came across that Christians and hunters are the worst at getting involved in voting. Why? I do not know. But it's resulted in our community of the just real liberal people taking over our government at every level, school board, city politics. We've got to change that because if there's any hope for us going forward, Christians have got to get involved in the political arena.

Gary Bauer: I don't want to get you in trouble, Dave, but the church that you're a proud member of now, does your pastor understand this need for the congregation to be active citizens?

Dave Owen: Absolutely. And he is very encouraging from the pulpit. I mean, he's obviously tries to be even handed about it, but he is a strong believer in involvement in politics for Christian people and encourages in every way possible.

Gary Bauer: That's great to hear. We need more pastors and priests and rabbis, faith leaders of all kind to do that. My goodness, where's the time going? We've talked for 20 plus minutes and I've got a couple hours worth of more things to ask you, Dave. I know even at this stage in life, you're a busy guy, but Dave, could you come back and spend another day with us talking about these things?

Dave Owen: Oh, I would absolutely love it. It's been a pleasure to be with you.

Roger Marsh: Well, a life well lived doesn't happen by accident. It's built one faithful decision at a time. You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, where we featured part one of Gary Bauer's conversation with Dave Owen, entrepreneur, civic leader, and co-founder of Golden Waves Grain. If you'd like to hear this program again or share it with a friend, visit jdfi.net. Our theme today here on Family Talk with Gary Bauer and Dave Owen, "An Everyday Hero Reflecting the Enduring Promise of America." And today, Dave talked a lot about the influence a man of faith can have at work, in government, and most importantly, at home. If that message resonates with you as a father, we have something especially just for you. The Dr. James Dobson Family Institute offers a free email series called "Strong Dads," and it's built around the conviction that a father's influence on his sons and daughters is immeasurable. In a culture that too often sidelines dads, this resource will equip and encourage you to lead your family with purpose and biblical conviction. To sign up for the "Strong Dads" email series, simply go to jdfi.net and search for that title, Strong Dads. Again, that's jdfi.net.

The Dr. James Dobson Family Institute exists to strengthen marriages, equip parents, and defend the sanctity of human life, as well as sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with as many people as possible. And that, of course, is all made possible by the prayers and generous support of friends just like you. Now, if you value what you hear on this program and you want to help us keep reaching families all across America, we invite you to partner with us today. Call a member of our constituent care team at 877-732-6825, and they'll be happy to share with you how you can make a donation over the phone.

Again, that's 877-732-6825. Now, if you'd prefer to send your contribution through the U.S. Postal Service, our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80949. Again, our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, or you can just use those initials JDFI for short. P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code, 80949. And remember, you can also express your support when you make a secure donation online at jdfi.net.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh. On behalf of 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 part two of this great conversation featuring Gary Bauer and Dave Owen, "An Everyday Hero Reflecting the Enduring Promise of America." It's coming up 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.