



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: 40 Years and Still: The Dobson Legacy – Part 2

Guest(s): Ryan Dobson, Danae Dobson, and Robert Wolgemuth

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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 Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and on today's broadcast, we are continuing our special behind the scenes look at Dr. Dobson's remarkable life and ministry. As you are likely aware by now, Dr. Dobson has graduated to Heaven. He entered into his eternal rest on Thursday morning, August the 21st, and though we carry a measure of sadness today here at the JDFI, two things can be true at once. Simultaneously, along with our grief, we are also uplifted by an overwhelming sense of gratitude for Dr. Dobson's legacy. And so what you're about to hear is an up close and personal conversation with those who knew Dr. Dobson best.

It was actually recorded upon the 40th anniversary of Dr. Dobson's historic media ministry. Yes, Dr. Dobson championed the cause of the traditional family, but he was far more than a cultural warrior. Dr. Dobson loved his wife Shirley. They were married nearly 65 years and their adult children, Danae and Ryan, and today's program features a conversation with his son and daughter along with two longtime friends of Family Talk: broadcast veteran, Brian McNulty, who served on our staff here at JDFI for many years, and also the Dobson's longtime friend, Robert Wolgemuth. By the way, this is part two of that conversation. If you miss part one of the broadcast, I encourage you to catch up by listening on our website at drjamesdobson.org. But right now, let's continue the conversation as Brian McNulty poses today's first question.

Brian McNulty: Today, I want to go back in the time machine just a little to get us going. Danae, you recall and you have an amazing memory, so thanks for being the resident historian for the family and the ministry. You remember a morning in 1977 in the family room. Tell us about that.

Danae Dobson: I do. The era when Focus on the Family first took off was very exciting for our family. And I recall dad playing the original Focus on the Family jingle for us on our home stereo on a Saturday morning, and he wanted us to tell him how we liked it and he brought home this little cassette tape, put it in the stereo, and we all loved it. It was seventies, so it was upbeat, it was catchy. It was in keeping with the times.

Robert Wolgemuth: Okay, now let me ask you a question. How many men do you know in that position would come home and ask their kids what they thought? Now this is a snapshot. This is the consistency of the man we're talking about.

Danae Dobson: That's true.

Robert Wolgemuth: If he would actually come home and ownership of this idea and the music with you guys and let you lean in on it, let you weigh in.

Ryan Dobson: And his wife.

Robert Wolgemuth: And his wife

Ryan Dobson: Especially, especially my mom.

Danae Dobson: He really was playing it for my mom, but he wanted us to hear it too and to give input.

Ryan Dobson: Right.

Brian McNulty: I'd like to pivot to the early days of the broadcast. We know there was a jingle, but he came home and he had a family discussion about this because as we learned in our last program, Dr. Dobson made a commitment to get off the road and do new and exciting things to reach people that allowed him to have family balance.

Robert Wolgemuth: That's right. That's right. And that became a film series. That was the Focus on the Family film series. I worked for a company called Word Publishing and they stepped up to the plate. Dr. Dobson could tell us the enormous investment and risk that they took and actually the film series, the Focus on the Family film series was not intended to be the finished product. They were just recording. They were just capturing this conference that he did in San Antonio and the logistics were awful. There was a game going on, some sporting event across the parking lot, the air conditioning went out. They are in San Antonio, Texas in July. It's a nightmare. And that reel that just was to capture this final seminar became the Focus on the Family film series. 80 million people saw that. A third of the people in this country saw that film series. It was an enormous success. It's when God puts His hand on something, which is the story we're talking about right now with your dad and your mom.

Brian McNulty: And those films become the basis for the new building a Family legacy box set DVDs.

Robert Wolgemuth: 30 years later, right.

Danae Dobson: And that did put us all in a bit of a fishbowl.

Robert Wolgemuth: That's right.

Danae Dobson: Our whole family.

Ryan Dobson: You think?

Danae Dobson: And I think I handled it a little better than Ryan did, but certainly the cheesy comments. I'll just tell you this one, I was at a Bible study one night and we were talking about some passage of Scripture and I said to the group, I said, "Oh." I said, "I never knew that." And the girl sitting next to me goes, "Haha. Your father failed." Seriously.

Brian McNulty: So you and Ryan were always exhibit A.

Ryan Dobson: For sure.

Robert Wolgemuth: I know your parents.

Ryan Dobson: Thank you.

Robert Wolgemuth: I know that didn't impact them. They still did what they thought they needed to do as your parents.

Ryan Dobson: And they weren't making us exhibit A.

Robert Wolgemuth: That's right. No, no other people did that. They didn't do that.

Ryan Dobson: That's right. And that's a very important thing to say because there are so many parents that are trying to live their lives through their kids. Our parents were, I mean, it just so happens that I write books and I'm on radio. It wasn't his idea. It really wasn't. It's just, I really like doing this and I fell into it. Is it because I've got a great role model? Well, I'm sure that's a lot of it, but they didn't pressure us to be perfect. We would get these questions, I'm sure Danae got this so much more than me, and maybe not I dressed this way, but it was, "Well, you wear a lot of black, what do your parents think about that? Well, you cut your hair kind of interestingly. What do your parents think about that? Ryan, you ride a skateboard?" I'm 13. My mom gets my hair cut and tells the barber what to do. What do you think they think? She buys all my clothes.

Danae Dobson: The best one that I heard was when I was probably in 10th grade and we were at the dude ranch and this guy said to me, he looks at me and he goes, "Does your dad let you wear makeup?" And he looks at me a little more closely and he goes, "Oh yeah, I guess he does."

Robert Wolgemuth: Wow. Okay. Now I have a question. Talk about the spiritual legacy. What was it that your parents modeled? Because at a certain point in our lives when we're growing up, we make a decision for ourselves. We do our best to obey our

parents and not cause too much trouble, but at some point we say, okay, either this is mine or it's not. So talk about that in your own experience and how your parents helped you through that.

Danae Dobson: You know how there's that saying, "a lot more is caught than taught." And I would have to say that having great role models as parents definitely helped me to decipher from what I wanted to take on as far as accepting certain principles for my life and the ones that I chose to disregard. I would have to say that now looking back on all the things that they taught me that are straight out of Scripture, they're tried and true now in my life. I mean now.

Robert Wolgemuth: And they're your own. They're not theirs.

Danae Dobson: Yes.

Robert Wolgemuth: They're yours.

Danae Dobson: Yes. Because growing up, I mean church was never optional. We had to go to church and if we were late, we got a talking to and if I walked in chewing gum, I got a talking to. So much of it was I felt like it was God was on one side and I was on the other and my parents were in the middle. That's how I felt growing up, that I answered to my parents. So now my parents are out of the equation for the most part and it's just me and God, but they needed to be there during my formative years to help me to get to the place that I am now. That's a God-given right that is given to parents.

Robert Wolgemuth: So how important was prayer in all of that?

Ryan Dobson: Oh, that's what I was going to say.

Robert Wolgemuth: Go.

Ryan Dobson: I cannot tell you how many times I would come home late and tiptoe past my parents' bedroom to see if they were still awake and they would be and they'd be on their knees praying for my sister and I. And they do it every single day. They've done it since before we were both born. They'll do it tonight for the two of us and now for my wife Laura and my kids, Lincoln and Luci, they'll pray for 'em. I can't tell you how many times I call my dad and he'll go, "Your mom and I just got done praying for you."

Robert Wolgemuth: There you go.

Ryan Dobson: I know, and I've known when I rebelled, when I did stupid things, when I got bad grades, when I got taken out of school and sent out on my own, without a shadow of a doubt, I know every single night somebody, my parents, are going to call out to the Lord, to the creator on my behalf.

Robert Wolgemuth: And that's people who are listening to this broadcast; they can be Dr. Dobson. They can never be Shirley Dobson. They can never do any of those things, but they can pray for their kids.

Ryan Dobson: That's exactly right.

Robert Wolgemuth: And it's the privilege that parents have. It's the most important. It's just not one other thing they can do. It's the most important thing they can do. And so you're sitting here and it's great fun to talk about your parents and what they did, but that's what they did the most, right?

Ryan Dobson: It is.

Robert Wolgemuth: Knowing that they didn't have what it took to really be what you needed as kids. And so the God of the universe gave them the power to say the right things and to lead you in a way that helped you make your faith your own. Early on, it may have been your parents' faith, but today it's yours.

Ryan Dobson: It is. My mom, definitely the focus was prayer. I've heard her tell stories about praying for my dad when she was five years old. She prayed for a future husband. Those types of things. With my dad, it's doing the right thing. It's courage. I remember when he got called to be on the attorney general's commission to study pornography or the attorney general's commission to study gambling. And most people don't know this, I don't want to sensationalize it, but we got real threats. Not kidding around threats but real threats. And he would say, "We're going to do the right thing because it's the right thing to do." It is trusting in the Lord of, "Hey, there are things bigger than ourselves."

Brian McNulty: I have a question. We're talking about Dr. James Dobson's career, 40 years in broadcasting and still. Dr. Dobson has the day off, but we're gathered with Danae and Ryan Dobson, Robert Wolgemuth, and we want to explore this life of service and it's been 40 years of service. And you touch on something very important, Ryan. Your dad decided to sign up for these two commissions and surely there had to be a conversation because it impacted the whole family, didn't it?

Ryan Dobson: Well, it ended up impacting the whole family. Absolutely.

Danae Dobson: There were definitely attacks. I mean, we really did feel the oppression when dad was serving on the pornography commission and the gambling commission, particularly the pornography commission, because anytime you step into Satan's domain and try to change things for the good, then Satan's going to push back on you. So I mean, our family felt that cloud.

Brian McNulty: Listen, did it go on longer than he expected?

Ryan Dobson: Oh, are you kidding? We got sued for years beyond that. Wait, we got sued by Playboy. We got sued by Penthouse. We got sued by Hustler. We got death threats. We had new security systems put in. We had people follow. I mean it was a serious, serious ordeal. And it's crazy, Brian, I heard a person talking about this about seven or eight months ago and they had the story wrong and they were talking about this specifically in regards to pornography. And we will go back to the prayer thing. That commission was going to vote and whitewash the effects of pornography. They were say, "It's not that big of a deal. Don't really, we need to worry about it. It's pretty much going to be okay. It's kind of mild stuff. Don't worry about it." My dad was the one dissenting vote and it was going to go the wrong way. And he called Focus on the Family and they stopped working. They went out in the parking lot and as an entire organization, they prayed.

Robert Wolgemuth: Wow. Wow.

Ryan Dobson: And the very next morning, every one of those people reversed their vote and they put in...can you imagine? Can you imagine, I'm hearing doctors today talk about the effects of pornography on the next generation of men. And it is devastating. It is absolutely devastating. Do you have any idea what trouble we would be in, any idea, had they done the commission? Had they gone the wrong way? We may never have recovered from that. There was only one person on that that said, we can't. We can't.

Robert Wolgemuth: The place where we don't have any idea is when we pray, we call up the forces of Heaven and nobody can stand against that. In fact, just a snapshot, my late wife, Bobbie, and I followed your lives in many ways, Danae and Ryan, by hearing your parents pray for you as you were going through various challenges in your life. So if your dad and mom were sitting here, we'd recall specific places, hotel rooms, the condo at Mammoth where the four of us went on our knees and prayed for you guys very specifically. When you rolled the car, when you were far away in a far faraway land, praying for you by name. So your parents praying for you became sort of a news reel to my late wife, Bobbie and me as we listened to what the Lord was doing. And so then the next time we're here together, we get an update and we pray again. We thank the Lord for His faithfulness and answered prayers.

Danae Dobson: Thank you for praying for us back then Robert and through the years.

Robert Wolgemuth: That's why we love you today. That hasn't gone away.

Danae Dobson: Faithful friend and prayer partner.

Brian McNulty: Well, and Robert, you picked up on that. You learned from that and it helped you with your own daughters, didn't it?

Robert Wolgemuth: Yeah. And that's sort of the community, that's the body of Christ that when we're together, regardless of the age, there's something we can give each other, right? We listen to each other, we encourage each other, we pray for each other. And the Lord communicates to us, each other, by way of speaking to us. So it's a wonderful thing. It's the body of Christ working.

Brian McNulty: Danae, you used the phrase, the grand communicator, just talking about how we communicate through the body of Christ. Tell us in your lifetime, across these 40 years of Dr. Dobson's ministry and broadcast career, how has he been the grand communicator?

Danae Dobson: Well, really my dad reminds me of Jesus's parable of the talents because he is the servant who was given five talents or more and has multiplied those through the Lord's help into five more. So he actually has 10 or more now. And that has been just a tremendous blessing for me to see my dad take what God's given him and put it to such good use. Certainly in the communication arena, as you mentioned, he's great on radio, he can write, he can speak. And it was terrifying when he had his stroke years ago because that's right where he was hit and his brain was the area of communication. So here's this grand communicator and he can't even say what a nickel is by name or a key. And people started praying like a million people prayed immediately and by the end of the 24 hours, he was able to speak again. But that is who he is. He is a communicator at heart.

Brian McNulty: 40 years and still.

Ryan Dobson: And still.

Brian McNulty: I want to ask about, we talked about this 40 years in broadcasting. It's really 40 years in media and mass media because of the print, as Danae mentioned, because of the newsletters, the films, the radio programs, the television show seen by over the 80 million people watched the film on television. So Danae, it sounds like your dad had a lot of different roles.

Danae Dobson: Well, I'll tell you Brian, there have been times where dad has stood on the front line alone and he's taken hits and refused to back down for what he knew was right. I mean his integrity has always been paramount. And I was thinking while you were talking about back when he first started to receive a lot of exposure, he was at the Christian Booksellers Convention and there were posters with his name all over and his book titles, of course. And he said that he was walking around the halls and he was seeing all these posters. And the spirit of the Lord spoke to him, not audibly, but within his heart. And the message the Lord gave him was, "I have chosen to give you this exposure. I have chosen to use you to glorify my name. Don't mess it up." So that was years ago. Now we fast forward to 40 years later, and I would have to say that my dad has done a beautiful job of that. He has not been perfect. He's not made every correct decision along the way, but his heart has always been bent toward the things of God.

And he's a man of integrity. And I wrote on one of his father's day cards how much I appreciated that I've never had to lie in bed and wonder what he was up to, how it was going to affect our family, how it was going to affect his ministry. I've never had to entertain that thought at all because I've always known that I could trust him and that he was a man of honor and character.

Ryan Dobson: There's no scandals. There's no stories. But what's he really like? He's really like you here when the radio, he loves people. He loves to laugh. He cares.

Robert Wolgemuth: And the best news of what you're describing, because a lot of people are listening and they can't say this about their parents, but God has given them the joy of being cycle breakers. So the legacy in some cases starts with the person who's listening to this broadcast right now. That's the magic of this because none of us can claim credit, certainly for our parents or our grandparents, but everybody listening can start new if the Holy Spirit prompts them and there's some great concepts. The legacy book, *Your Legacy*, paints a picture of what that looked like in his life. We all have the capability of starting fresh.

Danae Dobson: And my mom is a perfect example of that. She grew up in a very troubled home. Her father was an alcoholic. My mom could have gone down that path. She could have ended up really messed up. I mean, she didn't have great role models and yet she broke the cycle. Just what you were talking about. She's not scarred by those experiences at all. The Lord's really healed her heart.

Robert Wolgemuth: That's wonderful.

Ryan Dobson: Robert, I'm sure Danae's heard this as many times as I have. One of the ones that was most powerful, I was at the Summit, it's a camp here in Colorado Springs. My parents sent me there when I was 17. They didn't know what to do, trying to take any help they could get pointing me in the right direction. And Dr. Dave Noble, it's now run by Dr. Jeff Myers, has a camp on Christian worldview, and they sent me there. I now speak there in the summertime to the kids. And a year ago I met a 18-year-old boy and his 16-year-old sister, and they come from a highly abusive family. And he said, I can't even believe this, as young teens, they would listen to my dad on the radio because it showed them what a family was supposed to be like.

Robert Wolgemuth: There you go.

Ryan Dobson: This kid's got tears running down his face.

Robert Wolgemuth: Yeah, that's right.

Ryan Dobson: He said, "Your dad's the only dad I have."

Robert Wolgemuth: Yeah.

Ryan Dobson: I mean, how many times have you heard, oh, your dad raised me. "Oh, your dad taught me how to be a parent. Oh, I didn't know how to be a parent until your dad taught me. Oh, your dad saved my marriage." How many ministries do you know that the primary focus of their ministry is promoting other ministries? I mean, you listen to the radio today, virtually every person on the radio is talking about themselves. But since 1977, he's been showing you every other good ministry that's out there.

Robert Wolgemuth: That's right. He showcased all of those.

Danae Dobson: And on a smaller scale, the marriages that have been strengthened, the families that have been saved, the individuals that have been helped, I mean only when we get to the other side will we really know what all God has done through dad's ministry because it really is all about the Lord and His anointing on one man.

Robert Wolgemuth: And won't that be fun? And here's what your parents are going to do. They're going to take the crown and lay it at Jesus' feet.

Danae Dobson: Amen. As will we all.

Brian McNulty: Today we're with Danae and Ryan Dobson, Doctor and Shirley's kids, Robert Wolgemuth. In our final minutes today, I want to just ask you all 40 years and still, where's it headed? We've talked about broadcasting, but there are a lot of opportunities with new media as well.

Ryan Dobson: Seven years ago when Family Talk started, I really didn't have a great answer for this. I thought it was kind of a long goodbye to be honest. Parting with Focus was rough. And this might be kind of a long goodbye, and when I came to work here, my hot topic was Christian worldview. It wasn't really marriage and parenting, but I am in that season now and I am giving out these books. *Dare to Discipline* is as good today as it's ever been before. *Parenting isn't for Cowards*. *Love Must Be Tough*, *Love for a Lifetime*, you name it.

Danae Dobson: *Strong-Willed Child*.

Ryan Dobson: I know, my goodness. I just had a mom call me. She's got a kid that's biting and hitting and she picked up *Strong-Willed Child* that is changing their lives, changing their lives. Where's it heading? From here till eternity. The material is brilliant.

Robert Wolgemuth: And aren't we grateful for technology?

Ryan Dobson: That's right.

Robert Wolgemuth: That allows this to keep going. There were great voices centuries ago and their voices are silent.

Ryan Dobson: Robert, you were the second person I called when it came to the new film series. I called my dad and he laughed. He said, "Ryan, that's 35 years old. Nobody wants to see that stuff." And I said, "Oh, you're wrong." And I called you. I said, "Robert, when's the last time you saw the film series?" And you said, "Oh, 20 years ago."

Robert Wolgemuth: Confession.

Ryan Dobson: I said, "Just watch fatherhood."

Robert Wolgemuth: Yeah. Bringing Up Boys. Right.

Ryan Dobson: I'm telling you; I use it every day with my kids every day. That's where it's at.

Robert Wolgemuth: Fatherhood. That's right.

Brian McNulty: This has been wonderful. Robert, God bless you brother.

Robert Wolgemuth: Thank you, friend.

Ryan Dobson: Thanks Robert.

Danae Dobson: Thank you, Brian for being our host today.

Brian McNulty: We're Family Talk and we're here to serve you every day.

Roger Marsh: Well, what great stories we've enjoyed hearing these past couple of days here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and you just heard the conclusion of a two-part conversation featuring Dr. Dobson's son, Ryan, and his daughter Danae, along with longtime family friends, Brian McNulty and Robert Wolgemuth. Now, in case you missed part one of this broadcast, you can go back and listen to parts one and two at drjamesdobson.org/familytalk, and that's where you'll also find the audio for today's broadcast as well. If we're honest, most of us can measure our family life in Dr. Dobson years. I'm sure as you listen to the conversation today, like me, you probably thought about your own stories of how Doctor has impacted your life or the first time you ever heard one of his messages or read one of his books. Maybe it was something Dr. Dobson taught you about raising a son or daughter.

Perhaps it was a word of encouragement that he brought, especially at a moment when you were losing hope. Well, if that is in fact the case, we would love to hear your story and your family's story too. So why not drop us a line today? You can write to us. Our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk P.O. Box 39000 Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code, 80949.

For nearly five decades, Dr. James Dobson offered homespun wisdom to families everywhere. But that's not all because James Dobson dared to enter the

lion's den of cultural conversation as well. He spoke up for Christian values, biblical virtues, and the inexhaustible grace of God in the public square. Those core values and the tenacity behind them will never change. And gratefully, because of that legacy, the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute is postured to achieve even greater things in the years ahead.

We encourage you to join us in this vital mission. Your prayers and your gift today will help us continue reaching America with the unchanging truth about faith, family, and God's design for marriage and children. You can make a secure donation online and leave your fondest memory for Dr. Dobson when you go to drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. You can also share with the member of our Constituent Care team when you call 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825 or once again, our ministry mailing address, if you'd like to write to us, is P.O. Box 39000 Colorado Springs, Colorado, the zip code 80949.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for joining us today. On behalf of all of us here at the JDFI, we appreciate your prayers and your ongoing support of our ministry. 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.

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