



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: The Joys of Aligning Your Money and Your Faith – Part 1

Guest(s): Bill and Dana Wichterman

Air Date: March 26, 2026

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. When was the last time you truly examined your relationship with money? Not just your budget or your bank balance, but how your finances actually align with your faith. Well, on today's edition of Family Talk, our own Gary Bauer, senior vice president of public policy here at the Dobson Policy and Culture Center and host of the Defending Faith, Family, and Freedom podcast sits down with Bill and Dana Wichterman, authors of the thought-provoking new book called *Stewards Not Owners: The Joy of Aligning Your Money and Your Faith*. What makes their message so powerful, you ask? Well, the Wichtermans started their marriage with nothing, actually with less than nothing as they will share on today's program. And yet they discovered that biblical stewardship isn't about how much you have, but about who truly owns it all.

Dana Wichterman brings years of experience from her work in international economic development at USAID. These days, she helps Christians make kingdom impact through their investments at Impact Foundation. Bill's background is in law and politics. He's even served as special assistant to the president at the White House. He's also the author of the book, *Dying to Live: Finding Joy in Giving Yourself to God*. Well, today's conversation here on Family Talk will challenge everything you thought you knew about tithing, generosity, and financial freedom. So here now is Gary Bauer to introduce our special guests here on Family Talk.

Gary Bauer: Welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Institute. I'm Gary Bauer. We got a great subject today, money. Who's not interested in money, particularly in uncertain times like this, but we also have a great couple and a great couple of guests that are going to talk to us about that subject, Dana and Bill Wichterman. Friends of mine for a long time, particularly Bill and I have worked for many years together, are the authors of a brand new book. It's called *Stewards: Not Owners: The Joy of Aligning Your Money and Your Faith*. Now, let me begin by introducing Dana. Dana spent her career as an international economic development professional at the U.S. Agency for International Development. She currently works at Impact Foundation, helping

Christians deploy their charitable capital for impact investing. As the stock market's been trailing off a little bit, I think impact investment sounds like a very good thing that we would all be interested in.

She serves on a number of boards. She's the co-founder of the Faith-Driven Entrepreneur and Investor Network in Washington, D.C. Dana has an MA and international affairs from Columbia University. Bill has spent his career, poor fellow, in law and politics, just like me. I don't know what God was thinking about, Bill, but this is what He sentenced us to do. So our paths have crossed many times over the years. Bill's been a special assistant to the president at the White House. He's the author of the book, *Dying to Live: Finding Joy and Giving Yourself to God*, and an influential essay he wrote a number of years ago. Essays don't usually have a long life, but this one still circulates around because it goes to so much about what we debate as Christians about where is our main problem.

Is it a government that's gone off the rails or a culture that's gone off the rails, or is it both? And which one went off the rails first? So a lot of things that we always wrestle with even here at the James Dobson Family Institute. Bill is the co-founder of the Wedgewood Circle, board president of Faith and Law. He has an MA in political theory from the Catholic University of America. Bill and Dana, welcome to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Bill Wichterman: Oh, great. Thank you, Gary.

Gary Bauer: You're welcome. Well, let's get right into it. This is a great book, but I want to start a little bit here to help our audience get to know both of you. What were the financial rules or backgrounds of the households you grew up in? Because we all bring different things, right? My dad was a janitor, and I remember my parents used to get his paycheck and stack the actual cash around the table and line it up with bills. And then there was very little leftover, and it made me a very pinched person in the beginning of life with how one should handle money. But I think people will be more interested in finding out how both of you started out.

Bill Wichterman: Thanks, Gary. That really is important, right? Because the way you see money modeled for you and your family has potentially a huge impact. So I had wonderful parents, very godly, fantastic people. Money wasn't necessarily their strong suit. And my dad said to me when I was young, he said, "Son, everybody spends as much money as they earn." And I remember thinking, as a kid, that's not a good idea. I don't think you should spend as much as you earn. And they were tithers, but they weren't savers. And so I think that really had an impact on me as I grew up and was like, "I want to be different in that way. I want to be a saver. And I think being a saver is biblical."

Dana Wichterman: Yeah. And Gary, thank you for asking that question. I grew up in a financially comfortable home that was Christian, wonderful parents. We were told to be generous and we were taught, but we were never taught specifically. So I

assumed my parents tithe, but we never really talked about it. And I found that that was something we decided to change within our family to really talk specifics about what kind of kingdom work we were excited God was using our resources for. The other thing is, my father was an investor and he was a reckless investor. He presumed on the future. The whole idea of debt was not scary to him. And I think it led to my parents' divorce. So that was one of the hardest things I experienced were two Christian parents that had committed to one another, and then he left the family with huge debt and pressure that way.

So I was very, and still am very cautious about debt. And I also think it's true that the Old Testament says the debtor is a slave to the lender. And so we just didn't want to be enslaved in that way. We wanted to be free to fulfill our call, our mission, and debt is one of those things that keeps you back.

Gary Bauer: Dana, as I recall, wasn't it during one of the financial or economic downturns in the '80s that your father's investment habits really came back to bite the family and that led to the other difficulties that followed?

Dana Wichterman: Well, and actually may have been even a little earlier than that. He was somebody who presumed on the future and kind of wanted to get rich quick, and that was just not a great posture.

Gary Bauer: So I mentioned in the beginning of our conversation that this book is not just another book about tithing. And I don't want to downplay tithing because it's a biblical guideline and many, many churches emphasize it, understandably so and correctly so, but it almost can also be a "legal" approach to how we live our life. Let's check that 10% square. And is that before taxes or after taxes? And what if one year I give 5%, but the next year I did 15. It's that kind of an approach where this book is much more holistic and it's not telling people to give 100% of everything, but it is asking people to live their lives knowing and being reminded that 100% of it all belongs to God.

Bill Wichterman: Yeah. Look, I think some of us approach the tithe as we approach the tax man. You don't want to overpay your taxes. You don't want to get in trouble and underpay your taxes. So we can be kind of exacting about that, right? Understandably with taxes, not so with the tithe. The tithe is supposed to be first fruits, but some of us still approach this as if, well, this is just God's cut and then the other 90% is what I could do whatever I want with. And so it says in the Old Testament that God is a jealous God. Remember when I first heard that, I'm like, jealousy, that's a bad thing. Why would God be jealous? What that means is He wants all of us. And James 5 then talks about the dangers of hoarding and exploiting people. So I think this is ultimately a balance and everybody's story is going to be different.

One person can have a vacation home, another person can't. One person can have a boat, somebody else can't. This is between you and the Lord. And the point is you surrender all that you have to Him for His purposes, including your spending and including your investing.

Dana Wichterman: Well, and I think I'd like to add to that, that we are stewards or viceroys or ambassadors for the Lord through our entire life. And He gives us resources. I like to say the time, treasure, your talents, your ties, which are your relationships, your testimony, which is your story, and your thoughts are all supposed to be stewarded for the glory of the Lord, for the love of others and in taking care of His creation, and also taking care of ourselves. That is a proper role of stewarding the gifts He's given us, but it's stewarding over time and managing things well. And so that wouldn't necessarily mean for everyone that that would be giveaway everything today. It might mean managing it over time. It might mean investing in certain things or saving so that you have more. You've created wealth that you can even have more impact in the world.

Because I really think the bottom line is our impact in the world, that we want to be reflections of Christ, His hands and feet in the world. And when we pray, your kingdom come, well, we're His reconcilers. We're the ones that are building up the walls that sin has torn down. So I think that's where we want to look up how we manage and steward our resources, money being one of them.

Gary Bauer: Dana, when people hear folks like us talk about this issue, I think particularly for lower income people, there might be an assumption that easy for them. I mean, they probably started life out in a very good situation and a lot of people, as we know, are struggling to just get enough money to move out of mom and dad's house. So how did you guys start out? I mean, were you always in a position where it would be easy to talk about being generous with your resources?

Bill Wichterman: No. In fact, we started, Gary, like a lot of couples today with a negative net worth. We had no car. We had a one bedroom apartment, which was fine as long as you didn't mind cockroaches. And we kind of despaired of even being ever having enough money to buy a car. Remember that when we first got married, but we started tithing right from the beginning. That was fundamental. First fruits before you pay the tax man, the tithe goes. And then we added something else to it too, Gary. We added a generosity fund is what we called it because we were so budgeted and so planned, kept track of all of our expenses, which we highly recommend so you can examine your finances to see if they're pleasing the Lord rather than just taking a guess as to where your money's going. But it made us then not apt to be generous with our friends because everything had a budget.

We had no budget for being generous with friends. So we added a 1%. So this was our 11% early in our marriage, 10% the church, the 11% to our friends. And it made us when we're going out somewhere, go out for coffee, you go out to eat, you're thinking, "Maybe I could pick up my friend's meal. I've got that in the budget." And that became such a fun portion of our budget. I think that was really the beginning of our generosity journey was enjoying that. And if we didn't spend all of that one month, we rolled it over to the next month so that we had more money to be generous with the next month.

Gary Bauer:

That's a great story. I actually, in cleaning up our house a year or so ago and getting rid of stuff that there was no reason to keep because it had passed the time for IRS audits, I came across that budget book that my wife Carol and I kept in those early, the early, I guess it was the first year of marriage. And I don't know what astonished me most, but one thing that really hit me was how cheap everything seemed to be because we were writing every single expenditure in that book and it helped us realize where our money was going, but it was not a lot of money. And of course the salaries weren't very high either. So all this changes from generation to generation. When you were writing the book, did either of you deal with or talk to people about this phenomena that I think is out there?

And I think you alluded to it, Bill, that we all have a tendency to think, "Well, I can't really do very much right now, but I just know I'm going to hit it big someday. And when I do, man, am I going to be generous?" It's sort of the windfall idea that down the road, you're going to build a new wing on the Christian school, but isn't the point that wherever we are in life, we should practice this philosophy of investing in the Lord's kingdom?

Dana Wichterman:

Well, I think the idea is to exercise your generosity muscle, just like any virtue. You can think it's a wonderful thing, but if you don't start practicing it in the small times, I think courage is one of those things. If you're not courageous in the little things, you're probably not going to be courageous in the big things because you haven't practiced yourself into that. And I found that generosity, exercising that muscle started for me out of pure obedience. It wasn't because I have a gift of generosity. In fact, I was probably a grumbling giver, but I was doing it out of obedience. But then over time, it became a habit where it fit into our lifestyle, it fit into our financial decisions. So therefore, it wasn't difficult anymore. It's just like exercising. It's hard when you start out, but it becomes part of your life.

And so looking back, and then over time, it became joyful and I can't even imagine that we wouldn't do it, but before I was like, "Ah." And plus you have to kind of work through what your tendencies are, what your fears are, but it's been a great way to lean into trusting the Lord in a very tangible way.

Gary Bauer:

So to do this, I mean, you have to incorporate God into your financial decisions and financial decisions come every day, right? It's not just, are we going to put the big down payment on the house? It's also where you go to have dinner or what kind of clothes you're going to buy your family or ... Are there any recommendations on how to begin that process of giving our Lord a seat at that financial table when you're making important financial decisions?

Bill Wichterman:

One of the things that has been helpful for us is Scripture memorization. I'm a big Scripture memorizer in general, but I memorize a bunch of Scriptures about money. So when we would sit down every month, Dana and I would be to go over our previous month spending to see how do we do against the budget. We would recite Scripture. 1 Timothy 6 has awesome verses if you're not sure

where to begin about money that I really recommend. So that was one thing. Another is doing it in fellowship with other people. We had really good role models at our church, an adult Sunday school who taught about finances. This couple, very wealthy, they were billionaires and yet on church cleanup days, they were cleaning the bathrooms with the rest of us and they modeled what it meant to have an open hand with all of your finances.

And that was so inspiring to us because we thought they can do that. They can clean bathrooms. We can have that same disposition of it all belongs to God. And then I do think reading some books is another great thing. There's so many good books out there to be utilized. Crown Financial Ministries, we love them. We love what they do about financial stewardship. And then also, if you can find another couple in your life or if you're single, somebody else with whom you can be open and candid about your finances. We've done this with another couple where we open the books to them. They get to see everything we spent that year. They see our net worth; they see where our investments are and it's to bring some accountability so that we're not just walking this path alone. And the fact that other people were willing to share their story with us, other believers, God followers who are going to be saying, "Here's how I've walked out my stewardship journey." That has been so empowering and inspiring to us.

Dana Wichterman: And I think if you think of it yourself as a steward that you're managing the portfolio or the money, then you actually would want somebody to help you look at the books to say, "Is this pleasing to Jesus?" And whereas if it's mine and it's my time that I'm using my money, whatever, after I've given a certain amount, then it's a little scarier to show it to others. So I think aligning all of your resources, and that would include how you use your home and your hospitality, your values and with how those things can be utilized for the kingdom.

Gary Bauer: Do you recommend anything specific as far as having your children, what they should see and not see in order to prepare them when they reach adulthood to have this mindset that they're stewards of everything that they have really, and that that needs to impact their decision making?

Bill Wichterman: Yeah, that's a great question. So our kids would all roll their eyes when we talked about money because they heard about it so much, right?

Gary Bauer: Yes.

Bill Wichterman: We had a really fun family. Our kids are now grown, Gary, but we talked about money and death quite a bit. So we really wanted to prepare them for both things. And when our kids were small, I remember they asked, and we were living in this then very small three bedroom townhouse, six of us were in there and they said, "Dad, are we rich?" And I said, "We are so rich. When it rains outside, we're dry inside. When it's hot outside, we're cool inside."

And we tried to get them to see this in terms of world's resources, right? Almost all of your listeners, Gary, are rich by the world's standards. When you look at what it means to have median household income of \$74,000 in the U.S., that puts you in the upper percentage of earners worldwide. So we did early on also take our kids to a developing world nation and we went right into a slum. We went to a Compassion project there where we were sponsoring a child and we didn't want to be voyeuristic about it, but we wanted them to appreciate, number one, how much we have, and number two, what can they do to change the world through our resources? So we would go in there with an eye to what we could gift to those folks. So I think exposure to poverty is a really empowering thing for kids.

Gary Bauer: Dana and Bill, this has been fantastic. The only problem is I got about 20 more questions that I really want to get to, and I think our audience would benefit from. I know how busy both of you are, but is there any chance we can have you come back and spend another show with us?

Dana Wichterman: We would be delighted. Thank you.

Roger Marsh: Well, we are not owners of our resources. We are simply stewards of God's gifts. And when we embrace that truth, managing money becomes an act of worship. You're listening to Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and an inspiring conversation featuring Gary Bauer, our senior vice president of public policy here at the Dobson Policy and Culture Center, and his good friends, Bill and Dana Wichterman. The Wichtermans are reminding us that true financial freedom comes when we stop asking, how much should I give? And start asking, how can I use everything that God has entrusted to me for His glory? By the way, if you missed any part of today's program or if you'd like to share it with a friend, visit jdfi.net. While you're there, be sure to click on the link to get a copy of the Wichterman's book called *Stewards Not Owners: The Joy of Aligning Your Money with Your Faith*.

And be sure to also check out Gary Bauer's podcast, *Defending Faith, Family, and Freedom*. You can find that all at jdfi.net. Well, Easter is just around the corner. It's actually, Maundy Thursday is actually one week from today. This is a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the hope we have because of it. It's one of the holiest times of the year for Christians. As you prepare your heart for this holy celebration, we encourage you to visit our homepage where you'll find content to help you and your family reflect on the true meaning of Easter. Just visit jdfi.net to explore all the resources we prepared for you there. That's jdfi.net.

On today's Family Talk broadcast, the Wichtermans challenged us to see ourselves as stewards of God's resources, not owners. That perspective changes everything, doesn't it? It is why we are so grateful for those who partner with us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute through their giving. Each time you make a donation, you're helping us defend the sanctity of life, to champion biblical values in our culture, and to point families to the life-changing message

of the gospel. Your support makes it possible to strengthen families everywhere with biblical wisdom and truth, and every gift, regardless of the size, truly makes a difference. To make a secure donation, visit jdfi.net. You can also call a member of our constituent care team. That number is 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Now, if you'd prefer to send your donation through the U.S. Postal Service, our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado. The zip code, 80949. Once again, our ministry mailing address is Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk, or just use those initials JDFI for short. P.O. Box 39000, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 80949.

Well, I'm Roger Marsh. So grateful that you chose to spend some time with us today here on Family Talk. From all of us here at Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, we are grateful for your prayers and your continued support. Be sure to join us again next time for part two of our conversation as Gary Bauer keeps on talking with Bill and Dana Wichterman about the joys of aligning your money and your faith. It'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.

Dr. James Dobson: Have you ever played the if only game?

Roger Marsh: With today's Dr. Dobson minute, here's Dr. James Dobson.

Dr. James Dobson: The game goes like this. "If only, if only my wife was more like Judy Jones, or if only my husband was like Johnny Johnson, what's wrong with comparisons like this? For one thing, the conclusions we draw are based on a distortion. We're equating the obvious flaws and shortcomings of a person we know intimately with the public image of the person we idealize. In other words, that individual is imperfect too, though it may not be as apparent across a crowded room. Besides, the comparison game is specifically designed to insult our marriage partner and weaken the bond that makes a relationship successful. In other words, everyone loses when we engage in this mind game.

Roger Marsh: For more information, visit drdobsonminute.org.