



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** Hurting Kids and How the Church Should Respond- Part 2

**Guest(s):** Chap Clark

**Air Date:** June 24, 2021

[Listen to the broadcast](#)

**Dr. James Dobson:** Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

**Roger Marsh:** Hello everyone. I'm Roger Marsh and you're listening to Family Talk, the broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.

On today's program, we are bringing you the conclusion of a recent conversation that Dr. Tim Clinton had with his friend, Dr. Chap Clark. They address the topic of understanding and ministering to teens and young adults. If you weren't able to join us yesterday, for part one of the broadcast, you can find that audio and much more at our website, [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org). That's [drjamesdobson.org](http://drjamesdobson.org).

Dr. Chap Clark is the lead pastor of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach, California. He is a speaker and the author or co-author of 25 books, including the award-winning book *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*. Chap earned his Master's in Divinity from Fuller Theological Seminary. And his Ph.D. from the University of Denver. For the past 27 years, Chap Clark has been a seminary professor at Fuller Theological Seminary as well. Chap also served in a variety of roles in the church, and as a consulting producer for a reality television production company. Chap and his wife Dee have three grown children and three granddaughters.

**Roger Marsh:** Well, we have a lot to get to today so let's listen in on Dr. Tim Clinton's conversation with Dr. Chap Clark right now,

**Dr. Tim Clinton:** Chap, welcome back to Family Talks. So, great to have you. Delightful conversation yesterday. Challenging, quite concerning because our kids are living in a tough world. These are challenging times for both kids and parents. At the end of the day, Chap, we want to love our kids well. And every parent I ask, how are you doing this as a mom or as a dad? You know what they'll say to me? "I think about it every day, Tim. I love my kids."

**Chap Clark:** That's the most important starting point is what's truly in our hearts. But when we think we love our kids, are we so afraid that they'd go sideways that we put

too much emphasis on their behavior and attitudes? That's important, but it's secondary to having this sense of overwhelming love and gratitude for the privilege of having this person in my life. And the journey of watching them grow as I love and lead them is such an amazing gift. And it's so delicate that when we just get harsh, tough, scared that's when it can go really sideways. And our motives could be fantastic, but we've got to make sure we're watching our hearts.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chap in my office, I have an FCA photo, Fellowship of Christian Athletes photo. The caption under it is just one word, it's called "Influence." And the portrait is of a young boy with a football kneeling. And he's looking over at a crowd of bigger kids in a football huddle. And I was thinking to myself, as we were talking about the significance of influence that's happening in our kids' lives. So, as we get started here, Chap, if you were to pick up your phone, your digital device, you realize the influence we receive from that thing every day. How many hours we're on it, the messaging that comes through. That's where our kids live.

Chap they're getting influenced when it comes to values, sexuality, priorities in life, spirituality, everything that's happening. We need to be concerned about the influence factor. I think when our kids hit our teen years, they often turn away from home, in some sense, and look to their peers for advice and direction. But, at the end of the day, they're still looking to mom and dad.

Chap Clark: Absolutely right, Tim. We have the thing in our baptism vows here at St. Andrew's where I've changed them. Where I say first, "Do you know, love, trust, and follow Jesus." "Yes." "Okay, great," to parents. And then, the second question is, "Will you create the environment where your kid will see Jesus alive in you, in your marriage, in your family?" You create the environment. You can't force them to become Christians, but you can give them the gift of seeing Christ in action in your family. But thirdly, "Will you let other people in? Will you invite others to come alongside your family and your children, so that they will see that God is real and alive and powerful in people that they love and trust?" The influence of authentic relationships in Christ is the most significant thing we can ever have for our kids.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chap, I love that. All the research is now pointing to the significance of that parent-child relationship.

In our last broadcast, Chap, we talked about parent-child relationship ruptures. In the heart of healing and if you want to step into a new world, a new way of hope and healing in your family, you anchor it in relationships, authentic relationships. Chap, you remember the old saying, "The family that prays together stays together." We love that. I added to that "The family that prays together plays together and eats together, stays together." At the end of the day, research is profound play and eating and prayer. You hear what I'm saying? And how significant they are. But at the heart of that, it's not about food. It's not about playing ball. It's about what? It's about that relationship piece that comes out of that, that connectivity.

When you're pressing in, in other words, your first step on "healing" relationships between parents and children and getting them on the right trajectory is get in touch with your kids. You can't do that without hanging. You have to hang out with your kids.

Chap Clark: And here's another bit of research that boy, we got to pay attention to, the idea of just doing family devotionals, or just forcing prayer without relationship, without eating together, without turning off devices, by playing together. In other words, if we don't couch this in authentic living, the Kingdom of God is a feast, Matthew 22. What is the Kingdom of God like? It's a king that throws a feast for a son. Come and be together in great celebration. And that's what prayer has to be couched in.

So, in prayer and authentically living and loving Jesus, but being connected to each other, that's so great. And that means we got to kind of be real and allow ourselves to learn from our kids in this crazy world that's changing so fast.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chap, Russell Barkley, one of the preeminent research experts on ADHD, oppositional defiance, and more puts together prescriptive evidence-based programs for helping families overcome those issues. One of the key pieces of it is a little thing called special time. And in it he talks about getting 20 minutes of command free, connected time, if you will, between a parent and a child.

In other words, he's saying at the heart of what he does, which by the way has a high effectiveness rate, you've got to get parent and kid together hanging out, climbing into the world of the child because when you do it's revolutionary. He said, there's messaging that takes place in that 20 minutes a day that you cannot script, you can't replace.

Chap, what do you think is driving that?

Chap Clark: Well, he's exactly right. And, again, we got to look at this instead of programmatically, where we go, "Hey, I like to play golf. I'm gonna take my kid to play golf-"

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah, that's an indirect command.

Chap Clark: Exactly. In fact, that's worse because if you tell your kid, "I love you now come do what I like to do," it's actually worse because it's telling the kid, "As long as you fit into my world, I'm gonna love ya." But for me to actually go with them to try to read them, to listen to them, sometimes it's taking a walk. Sometimes it's sitting on the back porch. Sometimes it's them saying, "I just want to go to the mall. I don't want to buy anything, but I want to walk around and look at people."

In other words, you just got to feel what is the most significant for your child that will allow you to enter into their world? Because here's the deal,

theologically, we think that the number one command of God is that we obey Him. I'm sure you've heard that an awful lot from pastors.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Religious behavior, yep.

Chap Clark: Yeah. And the thing is-

Dr. Tim Clinton: And God loves righteousness and we're not downplaying that. But what we're saying is there's something that trumps this.

Chap Clark: It's trust. John 6, when the crowd comes out and they go, "What must we do? Come on, tell us." And he goes, "Believe in the one he has sent." That word, believe is actually trust. "Trust me and out of the trust, obey." In other words, obedience is the wheels of trust. When you obey without knowing, and trusting, and receiving the love, you're actually buying into an agenda which causes me more distance. And so, many Christians are plagued by thinking that God's constantly mad at them because they don't obey Him good enough. Instead of going, "Lord, I love You. I can't do this, I need You." Same thing with parenting.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And I hear the scripture saying abide in me. In other words-

Chap Clark: Absolutely.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Spend time with me. And when you do, it calms or soothes you. When I think a parent and child connect like this, when they're able to hang out in that... We're not condoning things that you don't want to condone. You hear what I'm saying. This is rather just crawling into that world, their space for a moment. It says that they're important. There's communication that begins to flow between the two of you verbally and non-verbally. You learn priorities, you learn what matters, what doesn't matter. And I'm telling you that relationship dynamic begins to influence everything in that parent-child relationship.

When you get in touch you also, Chap, you prioritize safe and secure boundaries. We learn then, that my job as a parent is I need to tell you, "Hey, these are the things you should be doing. These are the things you shouldn't be doing." There's a way to live. How important is that? And that's just called what we do as a parent and doing it in love.

Chap Clark: Absolutely.

Something that I've been learning as my kids, they have taught me more in the last two or three years, as two of them have had their own children. And the other one has been serving in social work. And they've all, in different ways, taught me of the things that were really helpful to their journey and things that were not. And one of them is, "Dad, you just hated my music. But you never asked me why I loved it. You never let me tell you why this music resonates with

me and my friends. Even though you say, 'You shouldn't listen to this stuff,' but you never gave it a chance most of the time."

Now, granted you try to navigate these things as you go. But to at least have enough of a relationship with your child to say, when we're exploring these boundaries, "Help me to understand what would drive you or even entice you to step over those boundary lines. What about that music? What about this behavior? What about these friends that are just driving you?" And if you can build a relationship where your kid will tell you the truth, you can really have a great conversation so they're learning how to make decisions to live a healthy life on their own, because that's our goal.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You're listening to Family Talk, a division of the James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton. Our special guest today is Dr. Chap Clark. He's a youth culture expert, best-selling author, *Hurt 2.0: Inside the World of Today's Teenagers*. Has another new book out called *The Adoptive Church: Creating An Environment Where Emerging Generations Belong*. Really cares about the hearts of our kids.

Chap in that boundary setting piece, and we've heard this for years, but we need to hear it again and again. You can get lost in becoming too authoritative, authoritarian. In other words, you don't give them any room. "No, I just said no, that's it. That's just the way it is." And there may be some times when you've got to draw a line in the sand.

Chap Clark: You just scared me. I just heard my dad, oh man.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah but, at the same time, what you do is you silence and you shame them. And you don't give them any room to think or to explore boundary. On the other hand, too permissive. We're "trying to be best friends" with our kids. We're dressing alike, being cool alike. And nobody's the parent. It's like, who's the parent in the family here? Wait a second, we've got some responsibility.

Chap, we've got to be careful that. We've got to give them some room too so they can learn and grow, and get wings and make mistakes, that's part of life.

Chap Clark: Well, absolutely. And the way to stay in the middle of that is that we are living healthy. And I say all the time, the center of it is that we're making sure we're consistent as best as we can in how we live this out because our kids are watching our behavior way more than they're paying attention to our words. So, if we're living relatively consistent, and we're helping them to think about how they make decisions, because we care for them as people, and be the parent with the boundary lines, that's really the key. Our modeling, and then our ability to teach them how to think for themselves. But we still hold the cards as parents.

And our goal as they move through high school, before they leave the home, usually around 18, we've taught them how to think for themselves and make those kind of decisions. Because we got to always be thinking the marathon. How I treat my kid at 12 years old, and 15 years old will influence their ability to make their own decisions at 20 to 25.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You bet. And we we're instructing them in the ways of the Lord. "Train up a child in the way he should go. And when he's old, he won't depart from it."

Chap. I want to use the remainder of our time to talk about two very important issues. One, how to make the family a safe place, which is something really, I think, dear to your heart. And then, number two, the role of the church and how to really impact our teens spiritually. Let's go back to making the family a safe place. Chap, how and why is that so significant?

Chap Clark: It's got to create the kind of space where our kids feel like they can be honest. And we've learned from our kids' 30s for me, my wife's much better at this, that if I'm consumed with my own thought, or I'm consumed with my own fear related to them, or my own anger, then that shuts them down and that hinders relationship. Safety is really this emotional sense that someone values me enough that they'll slow down their own agenda, their own thoughts, and create a space where we can actually engage in a way that I won't get just hammered or hurt. That's crucial for anybody in any kind of relationship that they feel like they're safe.

And as that happens, the more that parents can build that kind of relationship, then kids are freer to tell us the truth of what's going on in their life, which is really helpful as we lead and love them.

Dr. Tim Clinton: So what you're saying, Chap, is we need to be attuned to our children. We need to really be in touch with them emotionally. We need to give them the opportunity to express maybe their frustrations, or their disappointments, their anger. If we just shut all that down, we're not really a safe place. We are just like a house of rules and a lot of disconnect at the end of the day.

Chap Clark: Yeah. That even means, Tim, that we we've got to allow them with things that are not really important moral issues, to be able to disagree with us respectfully. And to learn how to have dialogue. Maybe they disagree with us politically. Or they disagree with a comment that we made. Just a chance for them to enter into relationship and conversation, that's what helps them to grow.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And the sense of security in knowing that, "Hey, at the end of the day, I'm not going anywhere. I'm your dad, I'm your mom. I love you. And will always love you, period. And we're in this journey together."

Chap Clark: Yeah, absolutely.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chap let's turn our attention to the church and the spiritual lives of our kids.

Barna came out recently talking about millennials saying, "They're not sure they know, believe, or even care much anymore about faith." And I'm not saying that it's an overwhelming number of our kids, but a significant number of our kids.

And Chap, it really has raised a lot of concern in the Christian community. And I know in a lot of homes, especially if you're sending your kid off to college, you think, "Uh-oh, what's gonna happen?" Chap, talk to us about how to engage our kids. What's your mindset? What are you thinking? You wrote that brand new book, *The Adoptive Church*.

Chap Clark: Well, it's because we've recognized for a long time that we have been losing kids from the influence of the church because the church has mostly been, about the last several decades, programs and basically segmenting off populations into many communities. And youth ministry is great and children's ministry is great, but it is not a substitute for the larger church.

What's interesting, what Paul does is he uses this notion when the church was at each other's throats, he uses this term don't you know who you are? You're adopted children, adopted ascension is the technical Greek word that he uses three times in Romans, once in Galatians, once in Ephesians. Don't you know who you are? You are mutually adopted into the household of God. You've moved from functional orphan-ness into a household, a family. John 1:12 quickly is the benefit of the incarnation is that to all who believe in Him, all who trust in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.

This is what the church has failed to recognize in the US for a long time is we are siblings. We are not surrogate grandparents and parents. We're not a bunch of adults that kind of control an environment and tell kids what to think and what to do. We are literally siblings in the Body of Christ. And we have to treat our teenagers and our young adults that way, where we include them in the community, and empower them to serve in the community and in the world.

When the church allows ourselves to see each one another as this household of siblings with Jesus leading us, that's when young people can bring a vitality to our church. Most churches have not opened their hearts, and doors, and minds to young people participating. And that's what *Adoptive Church* is about.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Chap, we know that an overwhelming majority of people who come to Christ do so before the age of 20. That's when their hearts are most receptive. A lot of church function, if you will, isn't focused on that community, the younger emerging adult. We spend most of our finances, our resources on 20 until death.

I'm still concerned about how do we reach our kids? What are you saying to us? What really matters to them? What is going to... And it's got to start in the

home, I know that. What is it that represents Jesus so well to them that He is a consuming fire. He's infectious. They can't help, but want to fall in love with Him?

Chap Clark: I love that question. The answer is easy, is when you love Jesus, you can't help but pour out the Spirit. And we have stifled the movement of Spirit in the lives of our teenagers and young adults who can teach us a lot about vibrant faith, if we would just let them be in our lives.

I used to say, "We need to assimilate kids into the Body." But now I realize, no, we need to walk in step with our kids and our young adults by living as adopted children of Jesus. And that means letting them have voice, hearing their perspective on faith. A faithful, committed 16 year old in Christ is going to be vibrantly growing as a disciple when we listen carefully to their journey, and we let them use their gifts. We have not. We're more concerned about what we want in church than we are about how can I learn from a 15 year old, from a 22 year old? How can I empower them to teach me with the Spirit's teaching them? It's really counter-cultural, but it's absolutely essential or the church is going to die in America.

Dr. Tim Clinton: So then, the ways of the Lord like Deuteronomy 6 commands are everywhere because it's a natural byproduct of what's going on in my own heart, my own life. You don't give well, what you don't do well.

Chap Clark: Well, Deuteronomy 6 is a great example. People have said, "That's parents." No, that's kind of transposing our cultural understanding back 4 or 5,000 years ago. Instead of saying, "Listen, Israel, you are to teach your children. Who are your children Israel? Every kid in the community." That's Deuteronomy 6, it's not just parents. Parents are included in it. It's all of us adults, every senior pastor. Dog gone it, I want to have meetings with each other where we go, "How are we listening to our 22 year olds? How are our 25 year olds changing our church?" Empowering them as they grow in Christ for us to walk together in Jesus. That's how your kids are going to be vibrant in a long-term faith.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And when it becomes a passion of our heart to realize, like we've heard so many times, the greatest gift we can give to our kids is the gift of a relationship with God in Christ. And then, to model that for the rest of our lives so that He does become all to them because He's all to us.

Chap, that is the great glory of our lives. That's what really, at the end of the day, emboldens our hearts together. That's what binds us together. That's what helps us do life together. That's what this whole last two days has been all about. It's about pressing in together, and helping our kids navigate this whole world called life.

Chap Clark: Absolutely right.



Dr. Tim Clinton: Chap, let me give you a closing word to our listeners, especially if they're hurting right now, and they're praying for maybe a prodigal son or daughter.

Chap Clark: Just know that Jesus loves you, and loves your child far beyond anything we could ask or imagine. And know that the power of God has the power to transform and redeem. May our hearts be centered on Him. And we soften our hearts where God says in Ezekiel, "I'm going to remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." And if we can do that, allow the Spirit to change us, God will do great work as we trust Him, and watch, and join Him.

Dr. Tim Clinton: On behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, their family, the entire Family Talk team, Chap we salute you and appreciate the work of the Lord in and through you.

And we pray for our kids that God would turn the hearts of the fathers toward their children, and the hearts of the children back toward their fathers for such a time as this. Thank you for joining us.

Chap Clark: Amen. Thanks for having me on.

Roger Marsh: Amen and amen. You've just heard part two of Dr. Tim Clinton's conversation with Dr. Chap Clark lead pastor at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach, California, and author of *Hurt 2.0*, and also the book *Adoptive Church*. We hope that these past two days of broadcast here on Family Talk have been a blessing to you, and that they've helped you realize the importance of authentic Christian relationship in the lives of teens and young adults.

If you'd like a copy of this conversation on CD to keep or to share, you can order copies online at [drjamesdobson.org/broadcast](http://drjamesdobson.org/broadcast). Remember, you can also go to our website to learn more about Dr. Chap Clark, his ministry and the other books he's written as well. Again, that web address is [drjamesdobson.org/broadcast](http://drjamesdobson.org/broadcast).

And don't hesitate to give us a call. We're here to answer your questions about Family Talk and the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. We're also happy to suggest resources for you as well, even to pray with you. Our number is 877-732-6825 that's 877-732-6825.

Thanks again for listening today. I'm Roger Marsh. We hope you'll plan to join us again tomorrow for another edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

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