



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Grandparenting: Using Your Best Years for Your Greatest Legacy – Part 2

Guest(s): Dr. Ken Canfield

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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. I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Roger Marsh: Greetings, and welcome to this Friday edition of Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh. Hopefully, you're getting a break from the heat, maybe even enjoying some cooler evenings. Maybe the leaves are starting to change colors, and not because they're dried up, but rather because fall is just around the corner.

Fall is one of my favorite seasons. It's when we anticipate the coming holidays. End of the year is coming up just around the corner. The midterm election is coming up in November. So much going on. Be sure to mark your calendars because this Sunday, September 11th, is National Grandparenting Day, a day set aside to honor all grandparents.

Be sure to pick up the phone and make time to see that special someone that you may have with you in your life. Especially as we get a little bit older, sometimes those phone calls, or those FaceTime's, or video chats take on an even deeper significance, knowing you may not have too many more of those in your future.

Well, I think back to August the 3rd, 2017. That's the day that I became a grandfather for the very first time. Let me tell you, when my grandson, Isaac, came out, kicking and screaming in the world, it literally did change my life. My wife, Lisa, and I are grandparents to three and three-quarter little humans, as we like to say, with the fourth one on the way. I cherish every moment I get to spend with each one of them.

I tell you all this because here on Family Talk, we are bringing you the second half of Dr. Tim Clinton's conversation with Dr. Ken Canfield about the invaluable legacy of grandparents. Ken Canfield is a nationally known scholar who has committed his life to strengthening fathers, families, and grandparents. He's the founder of the National Center for Fathering and the National Association for Grandparenting, and has been involved in many other non-profits throughout his career.

He has served as a media consultant to national, state, and community leaders, often in partnership with his wife, Dr. Michelle Watson Canfield. Dr. Ken Canfield is the author of many books, including *The Seven Secrets of Effective Fathers*, *They Call Me Dad*, and *The Heart of Grandparenting*. Dr. Ken and Dr. Michelle Canfield have 15 grandchildren and currently reside in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Well, now, with no further ado, here to introduce his guest and good friend is Dr. Tim Clinton for Family Talk.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Ken, great to have you back on Family Talk. Thank you again for joining us.

Dr. Ken Canfield: I'm delighted to be here and celebrate these generational elders and leaders, grandparents, Tim.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Your book, *The H.E.A.R.T. of Grandparenting: 5 Keys To Being The Best Grandparent Possible*, has been a joy for me. It really has been, Ken, a delight to go through it. Ken, I want to earmark upfront Deuteronomy 4:9, a verse that you profiled here. I love it because it really connects all this together.

"Only be careful and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and their children after them."

Ken, right there, it is in Scripture that we have a role, that grandparents are really significant and how we need to reconcile this piece, how we need to make it a centerpiece in our culture and not miss this multi-generational flow and transmission. Ken, we're going to talk today about the A, the angelic influence. Ken. I love this because when I think of grandparents, I want to be this. I want my kids to have such fond thoughts and memories of who I am in their life. Explain to us the value here.

Dr. Ken Canfield: The angelic influence... I came across in reading mainstream literature. When grandchildren were allowed to express, what word or phrase expresses your feelings about your grandparents? My grandparents are like angels.

I thought about that, Tim. Then I had the opportunity to look at 800 responses of adults who also reflected on their grandparents. When grandparents step in, particularly you, grandparents, who are raising your grandchildren... You are like angels. You're the safeguards.

Then think now. I'm not saying you are angels, but you are like angels. What do angels do? They worship their Father, their God, the Creator. They are endowed with power, prayerfully. What I'm saying, this angelic influence should kick in the spiritual disciplines as we mature in life.

Tim, you and I... We're busy, running here, running there. Are we in God's truth? Are we praying regularly? I mean, regularly and deeply. Well, now you've got

time. Are you applying that time? What do angels do? They war in the heavenlies.

You're not there as a grandparent 24/7 like the parents, but you can be there in an invisible, spiritual way. What you pray, and what you believe, and what you put into practice in your spiritual life can be transferred spiritually in ways we don't fully understand.

Then angels have messages. Well, there may be a little message you have. I think of Michael J. Fox, the actor. You know why he's acting? His dad wanted him to be a welder. In his book, he writes about that. His mom wanted him to do something, had a regular paycheck.

Everybody said, "You got to do this." It was his Nana that says, "Michael, you've got a gift of making people laugh. You've got a gift in acting."

Lo and behold, though he is now a grandparent, suffering from Parkinson's, that was the course. His Nana spoke to him a word that gave him confidence. It's definitely prayer. It's definitely a message. It's definitely a warring in a culture that is spiritually chaotic, that you are called to intercede at this time.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Ken, I noticed in your research that an overwhelming majority of grandparents said they were better as a grandparent than they were as a parent. Ken, the natural question would be, what's changed? What inside of them changed?

Dr. Ken Canfield: Well, I would say, maturity, recognizing there is an end to life that you're going to have to give an account for. It's a review of those things that maybe didn't go as well as you thought. It's a time to reflect so that you have a benchmark to begin the R of grandparenting, the reconciliation piece.

Grandparents, you're in a unique role as reconcilers. We've all been given this ministry of reconciliation, so says the Apostle Paul. How are we applying that in our families? Tim, as we think about those things, I know God will bring to mind stuff that you want to make sure is right, in good order.

Because of your maturity, and your age, and wisdom, why not practice humility? I keep telling people. That pad in-between the vertebrae... It shrinks over time. Yeah, you're a half inch, maybe an inch shorter. Well, why is that? It's to bring about this humility that God delights in. He loves humble people.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You're right, Ken. There's something about life, the journey, and looking back. Vision probably is a little better. More 20/20. I heard a guy say the other day, "I wish my son wasn't so hard on his kids." What I heard him saying, Ken, was, "I'd made that mistake."

You know that? There's a tension there, Ken, because you want to have voice, but you don't overstep your bounds at the same time.

Dr. Ken Canfield: Come on.

Dr. Tim Clinton: There's a delicate dance in here. It's like, hey, you guys should maybe think about doing this, or I think she should go to this school, or what have you. Ken, it's so easy. Here we go. We start moving into a special dance in this relationship. Speak to that real quick.

Dr. Ken Canfield: Well, it's simple, Tim. I love what you're bringing out. Two words, grandparents: zip it. When you think that you have an answer which hasn't been solicited from your sage wisdom, and you are just dying to say, "Oh, don't do that," they can read the nonverbals. They can see how you're reacting. When it comes to advice, you need to wait for the invitation. Certainly, there are times, if there's danger, it needs to be pointed out.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Oh, of course.

Dr. Ken Canfield: Learning how the flow goes back and forth because this is the deal. The way that you parented your children, they'll probably parent you someday as you mature and age. This is going to come around. Patience, which is a virtue from the Holy Spirit... Lord, give us as grandparents, patience, and wisdom, and a smile that is so full of God's love and embrace that people will say, "What's going on with you? You just seem so happy."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Ken, I often joke with my own kids. I said, "I can't wait to be in the backseat of the car saying, 'Hey, where are we going to lunch? I don't want to go there. I'm tired of going there,'" Ken, and just let that roll. They laugh. We have so much fun over that.

Ken, you are right. There's an element of respect and carefulness that we need to give to this. Let's go deeper, Ken. In the word, heart, let's go to the R, reconciliation. We know that there's a lot of struggle, that there's a lot of brokenness in homes.

We know there's a lot of pain, and there are difficult moments. There are difficult messes and more. Ken, talk to us about how we can be given to a ministry of reconciliation as the scripture says. What does this look like?

Dr. Ken Canfield: First of all, ACC has been a forerunner in bringing together resources to help us mentally, emotionally, and spiritually thrive. One of the most read articles at grandkidsmatter.org is articles we've written on estrangement. I would say that probably 15 to 20% of our audience today are feeling pain, hurt, and just disappointment that they don't have that access to their grandchildren they had hoped to have. This estrangement is huge.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Yeah, it is.

Dr. Ken Canfield: This vulnerability and transparency, which I spoke yesterday about, is so important. If you go to your children and say, "Look, I know I may have made some mistakes and failed. I acknowledge that. I realize that you are in the role of being a parent. Tell me, what can I do to support you and help you?"

If it's care for the children, if it's to help in some way, financially, if it's to just be there and regularly affirm them in their parenting, that's beginning to open the door. Sometimes if there's been major difficulty, Tim, as you know, this takes years to work through. There's pain. There's grief. They begin-

Dr. Tim Clinton: There's a lot of nights where you just cry yourself to sleep.

Dr. Ken Canfield: Yes, yes, Tim. I've read so many reports of grandmothers in particular that moved. They're widowed, and they moved to be close to the grandkids only to be looked at as fixture and not visited regularly.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Boxed out.

Dr. Ken Canfield: Yeah, boxed out. I remember, Tim, I was speaking at an event doing a conference. This one grandmother came up, and brought her husband in tow. They looked at me and said, "We haven't talked to our daughter for three years, and she has three grandchildren. What do you suggest we do?"

I looked at the grandfather. I said, "Have you initiated a call, or a written note, or anything to your daughter, sir?" He looks and shook his head. I would encourage you to prayerfully think about that and do that. Tim, they came back, because they were attending the same church I was at that time, two weeks later and said, "I made a call, and we talked for two hours."

Then about four weeks after that, I got another visit from them and said, "You know what? We want to let you know. We are moving to Ohio because our daughter said, 'We need help.'" I thought, here's a grandfather that took that step of being a reconciler. That means vulnerability, again, and transparency, and openness to have them be your children. If they're hurt by something, share something that you may have to process. That reconciliation brings about what I call a catalyst of family renewal. We need more reconcilers.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Ken, it's interesting. We were working on a back-to-school series. One of the things that I often encourage parents to do is set the tone for the day, when you get up, and just think about how or what you want your kids thinking, hearing in their mind. What are the last words they hear out of your lips when they jump out of the car, take that lunch box, and head on to the school? Set the tone.

I'm thinking the same thing here. As I was listening to you, I think about those who are broken, and they're sad. There's alienation, Ken. They love their grandkids. They love their kids. They may be in a horrible predicament, and it

may be painful. By the way, Mom, Grandma and Grandpa may be right. It's like, there's nothing anybody can do. You are right, Ken. Still reach out.

What's the last word you want them to hear from you? I love you as my grandson. I want you to know we're praying for you. We're always here for you. Hey, with technology we have, now you can get that message through.

Ken, you're right. Send the text. Do whatever you need to do. Leave a little voicemail, what have you, if you can, and ask God. Hey, Ken, you do a lot of reconciliation work on your knees, don't you? I mean, that's where it has to begin, and that's where it ends too, by the way.

Dr. Ken Canfield: Some of your children may be away, spiritually. If you say, "I'm praying for you, et cetera. I hope the grandkids go to church," it may offend them. Remember, soft startups. You don't have to use those words, but communicate, as you said, Tim, the love, that unconditional love. God can translate it spiritually. He's bigger than our words. If we communicate the effective emotional care that they need, and the support, and recognize they're going to do things different than we did... That's that element of grace that's given to us in being-

Dr. Tim Clinton: We're not saying you need to tolerate what you shouldn't tolerate.

Dr. Ken Canfield: No.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We're not saying, don't let people abuse you, or walk all over you, or trample all over you, but what we are saying is have that vulnerability and humility that, hopefully, opens a door, a closed spirit, and lets God do His work, Ken. That's hard. I would say this too. If you're in a place where it's dark and you don't feel like you're winning, find somebody to talk to.

Dr. Ken Canfield: Come on. That's exactly right. Find a battle buddy or a battle family that is dealing with the same stuff. Talk about that anguish. Process that grief. That is the power of a small group, particularly in a faith community, as you can share and join together in prayer. Absolutely.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Ken, let's go to the letter T in the word, heart, teacher. The one thing we can do... We talked about modeling earlier. Continue to teach the ways of God in how we live. Ken, what do you do? What does this mean to you? What did God teach you? What's the gift for us?

Dr. Ken Canfield: Yes. Well, I would say, personally, this whole idea... Tim, you came with Proverb wise saying. They don't all have to be tied to Scripture, but simple things like things will get better. You will get through this. That is as important as just being the human element. If you want to get supernatural, there's nothing more powerful than God's truth.

As you read, as you memorize, as you talk about parables in your own life, as you learn God's truth or lessons, those will be remembered. A thing I did, Tim, that was so helpful... I'm big on reading through the Bible because that's how I came to know Jesus in the college years. I'd never read the Bible. Didn't grow up in a vibrant Christian home or anything. Was a space cadet, drug world, a decadence, all of that stuff. It was God's word that opened my heart.

I said to my four oldest grandchildren, which aged from, at that time, 14 down to 11, "Hey, with Granddad, I'm going to do this. Let's read through the Bible, the chronological Bible, this year. At the end of that, let's go. I'm going to take a trip. We're going to go do something together."

Tim, reading through the Bible... Do you know what my 10-year-old grandson asked for for his birthday? It kind of shocked his parents. He said, "Can I get a shofar for my birthday?" They thought, "What?" Sure enough, he'd been reading Joshua and how this was used in a call to battle. The parents, of course, said, "Oh my goodness."

They went on Amazon, got him a shofar, which the dog ate. Anyway, Grandpa bought this huge horns, antler of a shofar. Every time we get together, you know what Pierce does? He blows the shofar. It's like it sends this shrill through your spirit.

I think God's truth, your wisdom, making sure, vocationally, you're sharing what you did to make resources for the family... Those things are the teaching aspects that we cannot forego.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

I know in my graduate school where, Ken, we took a course on family systems and learned how to do a genogram... What it was, it was looking at every person at each level through the family history, what was unique about them, what the family patterns were, et cetera, because families tend to reproduce themselves, and where the good and the strength of the family came from, where the challenges and the brokenness showed up, and what it did, and how it impacted lives.

Ken, with that, I loved how you challenged grandparents, write your legacy out. There are a lot of questions that kids would love to hear. It reminds me of that line in that country music song. It says, "Grandpa, tell me about the good old days. Tell me about what happened. How'd you make it through?"

I know this, Ken. I've got this image of my dad. I've shared this with my kids. When I was a boy, my dad was a pastor, but he was bivocational. He had to drive a school bus to pick up kids on the dirt roads to bring them to the main roads in central Pennsylvania. He used that, so we had extra money to live.

The image that scarred deep in my brain is my dad sitting at a bus stop. We would drive by it on bus 17. I would see my dad in the same place every morning with a Bible in the steering wheel.

I asked him one time. I said, "Dad, what do you do when you're sitting in the Jeep there?" He said, "I have my time with the Lord." Then he looked at me and said, "I pray for every one of you every day by name." I have never forgotten that. That legacy has lived in my heart.

I try, Ken, to spend time in God's Word. I try to pray for my kids by name every day, that God would work in their lives. Ken, we have an opportunity? I know it may be tough. There's some people out there who may be weeping as they listen to this program because it's not what they had thought it would be, their family system or whatever their circumstances are. Give us a closing word, Ken. Take us out here. Give us a word of hope and encouragement.

Dr. Ken Canfield: Well, first of all, this is Grandparent Sunday we're coming up on. I encourage every listener who has a living grandparent, do something to let them know that they're important. Grandparents, listen, as Tim shared his heart. There is two places in the Old Testament, in Deuteronomy and Exodus, that says, "The sins of the fathers will be carried forward for several generations." Tim, you're spot on. A genogram is a great tool. Do you know what the rest of that says? The blessings go a thousand generations.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Wow.

Dr. Ken Canfield: What you experience is beyond our understanding with your father and now with your children and grandchildren. Grandparents, take heart. Blessings that you pray, that you endow, that you give will impact generations that we will never see. That's faith in its finest form.

Dr. Tim Clinton: A thousand generations. The blessings of the fathers are transmitted a thousand generations. Ken, what a delight to have you on the broadcast to strengthen and encourage our hearts. Again, the book that we've been talking about is called *The H.E.A.R.T. of Grandparenting: 5 Keys To Being The Best Grandparent*, Papa, Gigi that you can be.

Dr. Ken Canfield, what a delight. Hey, Ken, I know you would agree with me on this. Even if there's brokenness, pick up the phone on Grandparent Sunday. Call him or go see him if you can. Ah, maybe God will use that to change everything.

Ken, on behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, the entire team here at Family Talk, we salute you, by the way, your wife, Michelle Canfield, and the great work God's doing in and through you. Keep on keeping on. God bless you. Thank you for joining us.

Dr. Ken Canfield: Thank you, Tim. You too.

Roger Marsh: An incredibly encouraging program here on Family Talk today, emphasizing the importance and impact of grandparents. Like Dr. Ken Canfield just said, this year, Grandparents Day falls on Sunday, September 11. Make sure that you reach out to your grandparents this weekend and tell them how much you love them.

If you missed any part of this two-day conversation with Dr. Ken Canfield, or if you'd like to learn more about his books or his ministry, visit drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

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We read every message and comment that you post there. We'll see you when you go to facebook.com and search for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. Of course, thanks for spending time with us here on the Family Talk broadcast today. We are so grateful and blessed to have your support. This weekend and always, may God continue to richly bless you and your family.

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

Dr. James Dobson: Hello everyone. This is James Dobson, inviting you to join us for our next edition of Family Talk. Every day, we come to these microphones with someone in mind, whether it's a busy mom looking for tips on discipline or a husband who wants to learn more about connecting with his wife, we want to put an arm around your family in any way that we can. Join us next time for Family Talk, won't you?