



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Show Me the Father – Part 1

Guest(s): Stephen Kendrick

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Dr. James Dobson: Well, hello, everyone. I'm James Dobson. 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.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Welcome to Family Talk. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host at Family Talk and president of the American Association of Christian Counselors. I'm a licensed professional counselor, a licensed marriage and family therapist, and honored to serve alongside my friend, Dr. Dobson, as the resident authority in mental health and relationships here at the James Dobson Family Institute.

At JDFI, we are dedicated to defending the biblical institution of marriage, the sanctity of human life, and righteousness in culture. Today, I have a very special announcement. Thanks to some gracious friends of the ministry, throughout the entire month of June, we have been blessed with a matching grant. That means every financial gift given to JDFI and Family Talk in June will be doubled. Your donation of any amount will have twice the impact on strengthening families, marriages, and fighting for biblical truth.

To give today, visit drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org, or call us, toll free, at (877) 732-6825. Well then, let's go now to today's program. Here's my recent interview with filmmaker, Stephen Kendrick, on the topic of his new documentary, *Show Me the Father*, here on Family Talk.

After serving in church ministry for 20 years, Stephen Kendrick now writes, speaks, and produces Christian films with his brothers, Alex and Shannon. Stephen produced and co-wrote the movies: *Overcomer*, *War Room*, *Courageous*, *Fireproof*, *Facing the Giants*, *Courageous Legacy*. It's a remastered film with added scenes to mark the film's 10th anniversary.

And Kendrick Brothers' new *Show Me the Father*. It's their first featured-length documentary for which he served as the executive producer and co-writer. Stephen also co-wrote the *New York Times* best-selling books, *The Love Dare*, *The Resolution for Men*, *The Battle Plan for Prayer*. No doubt, you've seen those books. He has been interviewed on *Fox & Friends*, *CNN*, *ABC World News Tonight*. He serves on the boards of the Fatherhood CoMission and the Christian Film Foundation.

Stephen and his wife, Jill... They live in Albany, Georgia, six kids, active members of Sherwood Church. Great to have you in studio. Dr. Dobson and his wife, Shirley, send their regards. They love and appreciate the work that you guys are doing, especially your heart for fathers.

Stephen Kendrick: Oh, well, it is an honor to talk to you, Tim. We have a deep love and respect for Dr. Dobson. My father, who grew up with an alcoholic, seven-foot-tall father... He didn't know how to be a dad for us. He was showing on reel to reels at his church, Dr. Dobson's original film series about how to be a dad.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Really?

Stephen Kendrick: Turning your hearts back towards home. Our dad was reading *Dare to Discipline* and practicing it on our constitution-

Dr. Tim Clinton: Oh.

Stephen Kendrick: With his board of education when we were growing up. Also, the tenderhearted, loving model of a father that Dr. Dobson communicates in that original series, I can say that I'm a recipient of the benefit and the fruit of his ministry. I'm very grateful to be here.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Amen. Few things stir my heart, Stephen, like the importance of a father. It's because, I think, as you well know, dads matter, period. I'm tired of all the messages out there that they're buffoons, idiots, disengaged, selfish, porn addicts. We all know that there's toxic behavior. That does exist, but that doesn't mean masculinity's bad. That doesn't mean men are bad. Doesn't mean dads don't matter. They do matter. Dads have influence for good and bad, don't they?

Stephen Kendrick: Absolutely. Before there was a marriage in a garden, there was a father and a son in all eternity. God created, Ephesians 3 says, the role of fatherhood on earth out of the fatherhood of God. He wanted children to have a living, breathing, tangible demonstration, introduction to the heart of our God.

Scripture is clear that earthly fathers are broken. There are passages that say, "Don't be like your stubborn fathers that were rebellious." Scripture is also clear in both the Old and New Testaments that God is a perfect Father and that fathers on earth aren't sent to replace Him but introduce the next generation to who God the Father is.

For Jesus to finish His ministry in John 14 and say, "I have come to introduce you to the Father. I am the way to the Father. If you've seen me, you've seen the Father," He was representing the Father the entire time He was here. It is the job of every dad, really, to lean on the Heavenly Father, first, and realize that God through Jesus can become their father, but also to represent Him to the next generation.

Dr. Tim Clinton: His presence, a dad's presence, really is everything. In so many ways, we look into the stands for our dad and consider his presence, his life in our life as everything. I was thinking recently, too, Stephen, about Ephesians 6:4, where the Scripture says, "Dads, fathers, don't provoke your kids to wrath." Often wrestled with that verse. Why is that in there? Why did the Apostle Paul write, "Dads, don't provoke your kids to wrath?" Then it dawned on me. It's there because a dad can. He can hurt his kids.

Stephen Kendrick: There's a direct connection between a father's words and the identity in the heart of a child. Children oftentimes are trying to answer the major questions of life of, "dad, do I have what it takes? Who am I? Am I loved? Am I hated? Am I strong? Am I weak? What am I?" Dads, many times, don't answer that question by their silence. In so doing, kids feel like, "I guess the world determines my identity." It is so important.

I tell dads in men's conferences. I ask them, "How many of you never heard your father tell you he loved you?" Probably half the hands go up. It's tragic. Then I tell them, "In 10 seconds, you can look at your kids and say, I love you. I'm proud of you. I'm grateful for you. I have high hopes for you. It will change the life of your child forever to hear their dad say that."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Boys and girls.

Stephen Kendrick: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We all are looking for that affirmation. You have a new documentary, *Show Me the Father*. We're going to talk a lot about it, but I want to go kind of toward the close, just for a moment, as we start. There's a piece in there where it's the blessing being given by your dad. Share a little bit about what happened there, and what it meant to you.

Stephen Kendrick: Well, our dad grew up longing for that affirmation from his own father, and he wasn't getting it. When he had us, the three Kendrick brothers, we're three years apart. We were growing up. He said, "I want to pass on to my kids what I longed to hear from my own father, but I don't even know how to do that." He actually read the book, *The Blessing*, by John Trent and Gary Smalley. He modeled it after that book because in the Jewish culture, God was teaching through Abraham, and blessing Abraham, and teaching them to bless their children. It was passed on.

He said, "When you bless them, I will bless them." If you read Psalm 20, you'll see a blessing being passed on. If you will read in Ephesians 1, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us His children with every spiritual blessing."

Well, what is that? A blessing is speaking and bringing about success, speaking identity into your children, love into them, with a hopeful future in mind. It is

basically putting change in their pocket, and wind in their sails, and direction for them to go out and fulfill God's destiny and purpose for their lives. The opposite of that is a curse, which is pulling the rug out from up under them, setting them up for failure, pushing them off a cliff.

Our dad at our weddings actually did a formal blessing. He prayed for months leading up to the weddings, and then he poured out his heart on us. We feature it in the movie, *Show Me the Father*, as to how he did that, where he learned to do that.

It was overwhelming because it wasn't about our deservedness. It was about the heart of a father, saying, "I love you. I believe in you. I'm praying and desiring for God's best for you, your marriage, your future children, every area of your life."

We look back and now see that everything that he blessed us with at our weddings now, we're seeing God honor, and we're seeing that come about in our lives. It makes us want to pass that on to our children, but also to tell people that Ephesians 1 says that when you believe in Jesus, you are sealed with the Holy Spirit. God becomes your father. He adopts you into His family, and you get the blessing of Christ.

God the Father said to Jesus at His baptism, "You are my beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased." We receive that through Christ, every spiritual blessing, the Bible says, through our relationship with Jesus. Even if your earthly father did not give you a blessing, you can read Ephesians 1 and say, this is true of me because of my faith in Christ.

Dr. Tim Clinton: When dad's present, not just physically, when he is also emotionally present, it changes the game. I mean, you look at death row. The number one common denominator, no dad. You look at higher academic scores. They're stronger in their male and female identities. Everything, all that stuff flows, doesn't it?

Stephen Kendrick: Yes.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's the narrative that we've got to figure out and get back to. That's why I think culture wants to destroy masculinity. Because if they can get that, they can destroy everything. Is that a lot of what's been driving you to go in this direction, especially with this new film?

Stephen Kendrick: Well, I see it in the Scripture that God is wanting to turn the hearts of fathers back to their children, children to their fathers, the last verse in the Old Testament says. You see it in the life of Jesus, pointing people back to the Father being the perfect answer. We also see it in the stats. The drug abuse, the porn industry... All of those things are fed by fatherlessness.

In atheism, actually, there was a book by Paul Vitz years ago called *The Faith of the Fatherless*. Studied four centuries of the most prominent atheists in the world. What they had in common was disconnected, abusive fathers. Because their fathers wounded them and they hated their fathers, they began to be angry at God the Father and hate God the Father. It translated into this venomous hatred towards God in all things.

We come back to this issue. We have to look back to, through Jesus, through faith in Christ, anyone can be adopted by God the Father. Then He steps in and says to any broken, beat-up dad who didn't have a loving father as an example. He says, "I'll teach you how to do it," which is what happened to our father.

He forgave his father. That's what I tell men, "You got to forgive your dad." When you forgive him, you get set free. Then when you turn to God as now your father and your example, He will help you step up in the lives of your children. Then you can move off of this law-based method of blessing your kids.

Some dads say, "I can't bless my kids because they're washed up. They're beat up. They're rebellious. They're foolish. I can't tell them, I love them. I'm proud of them. I believe in them." There's a misunderstanding here of how the blessing works because it is grace-based. It is not law-based. It is not earned. It is given out of the heart of a loving father.

I tell men. I said, "Think about a farmer. A farmer doesn't go out and curse a field because it has no fruit. He goes out there and cultivates the field. He gets the weeds out. He's pouring into it, fertilizes it, waters it, protects it. Then the fruit comes later."

You have to do that on the front end with your kids, which is what our dad did with us. We have to step into the lives of our kids and go ahead and start praying, loving, affirming them on the front end. Like that farmer in the field, you will see the fruit of that showing up later on.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's never too late to become a good dad, ever.

Stephen Kendrick: Right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Any moment you've got in this life is a moment that you can use for good. Stephen, I want to go to this documentary, *Show Me the Father*. What was the inspiration? I'm assuming a lot of what we talked about-

Stephen Kendrick: Sure.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Dialed this in. What really was the impetus that brought you to this place and said, "God, we got to do something here," where you felt that call from the Lord to do that?

Stephen Kendrick: Yes. In 2010, we shot a movie called *Courageous*. It came out in 2011 across the nation.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Great film.

Stephen Kendrick: Then internationally. It's about fatherhood. Out from *Courageous* was birthed the Fatherhood CoMission. There were over 100 fathering ministries from across the nation that were partnering together, and they meet one another. They were siloed before that. They began to work together, share resources, encourage, and pray for one another. They continue to meet every year, have since 2012. We hear amazing stories every year as to what God is doing in the fatherhood space and amazing testimonies.

During 2019, we were praying after the movie *Overcomer*, as it was coming out. The Lord started redirecting us, saying, "Make a documentary about fatherhood, true stories." By faith, we started moving forward, not knowing what it was going to be about, not realizing that we were going to shoot Sherman Smith and Deland McCullough, one of the most incredible, *NFL's* coaching, fatherhood stories ever with twists, and turns, and emotions. We ended up filming our own father, and him walking through his journey, and then the blessing that he gave us.

Jim Daly, the president of Focus on the Family, ended up sharing his testimony of growing up fatherless and how God sent father figures into his life. My own daughter's adoption story, we featured because of how much we learned about the fatherhood heart of God through that. We shot this documentary not knowing that a pandemic was going to hit, not knowing that production across the nation with film sets was going to shut down. All we needed was three people and some masks to fly into a city and interview people for this documentary.

Without missing a beat, *Show Me the Father* was released in theaters last year, got a A+ cinema score. It's been winning awards. Now we're hearing from prisons, from ministries. Internationally, people are using this film because we don't beat up dads in this movie. We talk about the heart of our Heavenly Father. There's a lot of healing that people are experiencing.

One example, we did a pre-screening in Alabama in a theater of *Show Me the Father*. The security guard hired to make sure no one pirated the movie got caught up watching the film. She broke down and wept afterwards, walked over, and said, "I'm ready to surrender my life to Christ." She said, "My dad shot me with a gun when I was a kid. I've hated him my whole life, but I've had this missing piece. I'm realizing that God is the perfect Father I've been longing for."

We are hoping that the movie not only brings encouragement to dads, but a whole lot of healing for people that have been beat up by their dads, or abandoned, or abused by their fathers. Most importantly, God the Father is the

star of the film, and it ends pointing us back to who He is, that He is perfect in our imperfect world.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I love that. I do. As a part of this whole journey, you've shared a little bit about the adoption process of your daughter, Mia. Can you share some of that story with us?

Stephen Kendrick: Sure. My wife and I were on an airplane, actually flying to New York. We had four children at home. The Lord spoke to me through John 10, and basically turned my heart, and said, "You need to be open to adoption."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Wow.

Stephen Kendrick: Well, I turned to my wife on the airplane and said, "I think God is saying we need to consider adoption." Well, I didn't know that for two years, she had been praying for me, that the Lord would turn my heart towards adoption. You fast forward two years later, all the paperwork was completed, and we started receiving referrals from China. These are girls that have special needs.

The first four referrals that came, there was this dark heaviness, this lack of peace. It says in Colossians 3:15, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts," and there was just no peace. We turned down four referrals, not really knowing why. It didn't make sense to us. On the fifth referral, there was this total peace, but her condition was more severe. She was born with half a heart, needed major heart surgeries.

It said on her report, she was born on 2/14/2011. That's Valentine's day, 2011. My wife said, "She's born on Valentine's Day with a broken heart." I thought, "That'll preach." We had this piece about it. We locked in to adopt her, to fly to China to get her.

A few weeks later, my wife came to me and said, "When did God speak to you on that airplane about adoption?" I didn't remember. I went back, and I opened up my Bible. Next to John 10:16 was 2/14/2011, the same day-

Dr. Tim Clinton: Wow.

Stephen Kendrick: That she was being born in China was the same day God spoke to me on that airplane, saying, "I have someone for you."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Wow.

Stephen Kendrick: Through that process, we learned about Ephesians 1:2 and 3. We learned about God adopting us through our faith in Christ and that Mia didn't earn anything that we did for her. We set our heart on her. We went and got her, rescued her. She has the same inheritance, the same identity as our biological children, just as equally loved and valued.

Stephen Kendrick: It says in Ephesians that we need to discover... The Holy Spirit can reveal it to us, but we need to discover the identity that we have in Christ when God adopts us, that we have an inheritance in Heaven waiting for us. We have the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, that we have forgiveness of our sins.

Our spiritual debts have been paid, and we have the blessing and the love of our Heavenly Father. We have bold access to His throne and His heart through Jesus. Our spiritual identity came to life through this process of this physical adoption of Mia.

Dr. Tim Clinton: When you look back and you think about what you've gone through in this journey for a moment, how has that impacted your perspective on being a dad and fatherhood itself? What does that mean to me as a dad?

Stephen Kendrick: God sees everything that we've been through and that we're going through. He knows our hearts better than we know them ourselves. Scripture is very clear that He has a compassionate heart. It says in Psalm 103, "As a father shows compassion on His children, so God shows compassion on us."

The prodigal son story is a picture of our father heart of God, that when we deserve it the least, He's willing to get off the porch, and run towards us, and embrace us, and take us back. For him to say, "Take my best robe and put it on my son," who doesn't deserve it? Take my ring and put it on his finger. He doesn't deserve it, but he is my son whom I love.

That is the father heart of God, and it's not just for children. It is for broken dads that are out there who need to turn to God, and be a little boy in His arms, and seek His forgiveness through Jesus, to seek the love that they need for themselves personally. We can't give what we don't have. The way we love our kids is we learn to receive the love that the Father has for us. It pours out of His heart.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I know that some may be listening to... They're there, "I struggle when I think about my own kids. I don't necessarily feel close to them. What do I do? How do I press into that place? How do I get beyond all this brokenness in my own life?"

Stephen Kendrick: I think if you forgive your dad, there's going to be this new breakthrough in your life. You got to get yourself to the place where in prayer, you say, "God, I forgive. I release from my heart all the wounds, the hurts that my dad has put in my life."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Because forgiveness only takes one person. It doesn't take two.

Stephen Kendrick: That's right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's just me.

Stephen Kendrick: That's right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I can do this piece, and I need to do that.

Stephen Kendrick: Well, in Mark 11, Jesus says, "When you're praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone." You don't wait on them to apologize. Sometimes Dad is dead and in the grave. He ain't going to apologize.

Dr. Tim Clinton: You see a lot of people wanting to just, still pay him back.

Stephen Kendrick: That's right.

Dr. Tim Clinton: I'm not going to talk to him. I'm not going to do anything because of how he treated me. All that does is just... It's just like poison going through your own body, right?

Stephen Kendrick: Absolutely. We want mercy and grace from God for our own sins, but we want justice on the people who sin against us. Jesus said in the model prayer, as we're calling on God as father, "Forgive me of my trespasses and sins as I forgive those who sin against me." Then He says, "If you don't forgive others, God is not going to forgive you."

We all want God's forgiveness, 100% of our sins to be forgiven for us to be able to go to Heaven. He also calls on us to extend that same undeserved grace to the people who have hurt us, and it sets us free. I mean, it's amazing how love can pour into our hearts when we finally let go.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Stephen, being reconciled is a whole nother conversation. May not have the opportunity or, I mean, there may be a lot of barriers to that, but I can release my dad because I need to do that very thing. You're right. When we do, that's the game changer.

Dr. Tim Clinton: By the way, we forgive because we're forgiven in Christ. That's what Paul said in Ephesians 4. Then we're free to look at our kids and receive them differently.

Stephen Kendrick: Absolutely.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Respond to them differently. Let's close this way. What does it look like when a dad gets free, and he's in a loving relationship with his kids?

Stephen Kendrick: It's beautiful. It's beautiful because I saw it happen with my own dad. It goes from bitterness to tenderness. It goes from anger to joy and freedom. He begins to extend grace, and mercy, and deserved love to his kids. They begin to bloom under that river of love from their dad.

Dr. Tim Clinton: That's what this has all been about today. If you're out there and your heart's broken, we pray that God would pour river of life, and hope, and healing into your life.

Our special guest today has been Stephen Kendrick. You know him from a lot of movies out there, like *Overcomer*, *War Room*, *Courageous*, *Fireproof*, *Facing the Giants*, and more. Such a delight. On behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, and the team here, again, we salute the great work that God's doing in and through you. Can't wait for our discussion tomorrow as we're going to talk more about *Show Me the Father*, a lot of the particulars related to that, and the messaging that's behind this incredible work of the Kendrick brothers. Thank you again for joining us.

Stephen Kendrick: Thank you, brother.

Roger Marsh: Well, that's it for today. We thank you for listening. Before we leave, I'd like to remind you that if you missed any part of today's program, go to our broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org and listen to the entire episode, streaming in on-demand anytime. That's drjamesdobson.org/familytalk.

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

Dr. Tim Clinton: Dr. Tim Clinton here, once again, to remind you that Father's Day is this coming weekend. At the James Dobson Family Institute, we love dads. We recognize the crucial role that fathers play in the life of their sons and daughters. To celebrate and honor fathers everywhere, we've created a valuable, easy-to-use resource just for dads. It's the "Strong Dads" email series. To sign up, just visit drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org.

This 10-day email series, which contains, by the way, relevant resources from Dr. Dobson, will help empower you to step into your role and calling as a father. Sign up for our "Strong Dads" email series today by visiting drjamesdobson.org.

Hey, don't forget. This month is a perfect time to give to the James Dobson Family Institute. Because of the generosity of a number of friends, we've been given a matching grant of \$300,000 for the month of June. That means your gift of any amount to the Dobson Family Institute or Family Talk this month will be doubled.

Your financial support allows us to help couples grow closer, enjoy deeper intimacy than they've ever experienced. We also encourage and equip parents so they can stay engaged with their kids and help them grow into godly adults. To give and to have your impact doubled, visit drjamesdobson.org or call us, toll free (877) 732-6825. Remember, this matching grant is only available until we hit our goal. Thank you.