



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Dr. Bruce Wilkinson: The Power of Forgiveness

Guest(s): Dr. Bruce Wilkinson

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Dr. Dobson: You're listening to Family Talk, the radio broadcasting division of The James Dobson Family Institute. I am that James Dobson, and I'm so pleased that you've joined us today.

Roger Marsh: Do you ever find yourself struggling to communicate with God? Are your prayers seemingly going unanswered? Well, the answers may lie in a critical area many believers overlook along their spiritual journeys. And in just a moment Dr. Bruce Wilkinson delves into the ways in which unforgiveness interrupts our relationship with God. As he'll explain, harboring resentment or anger towards someone not only hurts us personally, but it also hurts our spiritual lives as well. Now, before we hear that message, let me tell you a little bit more about our guest. Dr. Bruce Wilkinson is a celebrated author, having written over 60 titles. His most notable work is *The Prayer of Jabez*, which remains the fastest selling book of all time.

Dr. Wilkinson holds a master's in theology and a doctorate in divinity. He also founded the organizations, Teach Every Nation and Walk Through The Bible. The presentation you're about to hear was recorded at the 2016 National Day of Prayer men's breakfast. It's a very piercing message that will challenge you to examine any unresolved tension in your life. Here now is Dr. Bruce Wilkinson on this special edition of Family Talk.

Dr. Bruce Wilkinson: Great to be with you again. Great to be with the Dobsons and the Evans, good friends of many years, and for all of you to take time out and to pray and to repent. And I want to share with you the last time that I was here in Washington, DC at the Day of Prayer, that happened 16 years ago. And I was driving in Atlanta and got a call from Mrs. Dobson on the phone. And she said, "Jim and I just had a trip, a car trip, and we're listening to sermons. And we listened to your sermon on The Prayer of Jabez and it so affected us, we wondered if you would do us a favor." I said, "Surely. If I can, I will, of course." "Would you come to Washington, DC and would you preach The Prayer of Jabez as the keynote for the Day of Prayer?" And I almost drove off the road.

And I said, "You got to be kidding." She said, "No, we didn't know much about Jabez, but we like him. And would you do that?" Prayed about that. Talked to

my wife. Accepted it. How many of you have ever read or prayed the prayer of... Look, these are spiritual giants here in the room. And you may remember that became a New York Time, one, USA, one, Wall Street, one, People, one. It was number one for over a year, and it's all about praying. And what people did is they tried it. They said, "Dear God, please bless me. Please let me do more for you. Expand my territory," which is God has been waiting for a long time for people to say that instead of, "I have too much to do." "Please let me do more."

Well, here we are 16 years later and we just finished the newest one. It's the most important book I've ever written. It was the hardest one I've ever written, and it is about forgiveness. I want to talk to you just a minute about a topic. Why does God say no so many times? What is the blockage? What is the hindrance for us getting yeses? When I was a young man, I read through church history over and over again looking, who was the man who got most yeses from God? You know his name. He got 10,000 answers to prayer specific in writing. His name was George Muller. And I set out as a benchmark then, that's what a man of prayer could look like, 10,000 answers to prayer. And I got my journal and began to number my prayer requests and yes or no.

And thousands of prayers later, I wanted to know what's the protocol to get even more yeses. Protocol, it's when a superior being, an authority, sets up a way of doing things with the other people that report or come to their presence. And I said, "What is God's protocol about prayer?" Because he said, "Whatever you want, whatever you desire, ask me." I said to the Lord, "Are you exaggerating here? Because if you're not, I want to know what's stopping. Why do I get too many no's, in my opinion?" And you know the positive sides of praying. "Obey what I've said." Okay. "Abide with me. Hang around with me a lot." Okay. Doing those things pretty okay. Not perfect, but okay. Still too many no's.

I wanted to know why are there no's? What's the protocol for God to say no when it's not something that I'm praying for inappropriately? And perhaps you've had that same question. And I want to give you the number one in scripture. The number one reason he says no, and it's not what you think. In the Bible in Mark chapter 11 there's one of these great promises, those of us who pray a lot come back to. Jesus said to them, "Have faith in God, for surely I say to you, you can say to this mountain, 'Be removed.' And it will be cast into the sea. And does not doubt in his heart." So that doubt issue. "But believes that those things he says will come to pass. He will have whatever he wants." Oh, I'm sure Jesus was lying.

We have such massive unbelief about that. He couldn't really mean that. "Therefore, I say to you, whatever things you ask, when you pray, believe that you will receive them and you will have them." Got it. Got it. Okay. Why doesn't it work? Next verse. "And, and whenever you stand praying," like we just did, "if you have anything against anyone," anything against anyone? "forgive him, that your father in heaven may also forgive you, your trespasses." But what does that have to do with getting yeses? Answer that because this gives me no. If you

have something against somebody. If you have unforgiveness toward president Obama.

Yeah, that's right. The Senate, the Congress, the judicial. The IRS. Excuse me, [06:55 inaudible]. "Forgive him, that your father in heaven may also forgive you." That's conditional clause in Greek. It means if you don't do this, then this won't happen. If you don't forgive somebody else who's wounded you, whether purposeful or not. God stops forgiving you. Doesn't it say that? That your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

But if you do not forgive, neither will your father in heaven, forgive you your trespasses. So let's say ten years ago, somebody really wounded you, big time. Unfairly, especially. Betrayal, robbery, theft, immorality, your wife had an affair, who knows what it was. And you decided you're going to stuff it. Something men do. We stuff it. And we think it won't affect us, but we have the sin called F-O-R-G-I-V-E.

And from that point forward, God says, "I have stopped forgiving you." You've what? Yep. If you don't forgive, I will not forgive. And this is connected to praying. Whatever you want, except when this is occurring. We're all in leadership here. Leaders are wounded many times. I sure have been. Some are easier to forgive than others, but what on earth does it mean that He won't forgive me? I thought when I accepted Jesus Christ, all my sins are forgiven. Well, let's go back a little bit to the second passage I want you to see. When the disciples said to him, "Teach us to pray." You'd expect a four page letter. This is how you pray. This, this, this, this, this, this. He didn't. He gave the essence of the secrets about praying and in the middle of it, you know what He says?

He says this, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Forgive us, our sins, our trespasses, the things we owe to you as we forgive those other people. And I'm sure the disciples were thinking to themselves, oh, you got to be kidding. He only forgives, "as I, so he?" And so Jesus knew what was going on in their mind. And the next thing that's still in red when he says, "Amen." He says "for," because everybody was doubting, this couldn't be really true, "For if you forgive men, their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses..." You know what it says, but you haven't come to grips with it. "Neither will your Father forgive yours." So let's say that you have a lot of people that wounded you. And you didn't forgive and you didn't forgive. And he says, "hey," because he always pushes on us to forgive.

And if we choose not to forgive, he keeps his word. It's a decree. If you don't forgive them, I won't forgive you. Which means you have a massive number of sins that are an open door to be attacked. You are not protected. I can teach about this, but when you accept Christ as your savior, he gives you eternal salvation. And you're given entrance into heaven because of Christ. But on earth, nothing to do with eternal salvation here, it's when you commit a sin of unforgiveness, even if it's wrongly done against you, and you don't forgive, the

father will stop forgiving you, listen to this, until you choose to forgive. Some of you have massive amounts of sins that have not been forgiven. Because you've not gone over the root called forgiven, and take it out. I want to give you just a minute about what really happens here.

When Peter went to him and talked to him about forgiving, he said seven times, which is a massive number. And he was expecting some affirmation from Jesus. And he got none. He said, "No, not seven. How about 70 times seven?" Overwhelming. How could you forgive 70 times seven? Believe it or not, Jesus' answer is a parable that gives all of us the reason to forgive 70 times seven. And I learned this 25 years ago and it shocked me, changed my life. And I find less than one person out of 500 understands Christ's answer. Less than one in 500. You remember the parable of the King had a VP working for him, overwhelming amount of debt. I'm going to throw you in prison, sell your stuff, et cetera. Falls on the ground. Bows repeatedly, please, please, please have compassion on me. He releases him. He forgives him his debt.

That middleman had somebody down here who owed him a little bit of money in comparison and could have probably paid it off. Well, he bows down. He begs for compassion. Doesn't give it, throws him and his wife and his kids and everything he owns into prison. And then what takes place is a shocking sentence. Most people think that Christ's answer to forgiving other people is because God forgave us an immeasurable debt, then we should be able to forgive other people. But do you know, that's not what he taught. It's not what he taught. In fact that truth doesn't seem to work. You already know that, but you probably have a lot of unforgiveness. It didn't work. You know why it didn't work? It's not the answer. It is a fact, but it's not at all what Jesus teaches. What's he trying to teach?

He's trying to teach that there is something, if you understand, you will choose to run to forgiveness. You will be so internally motivated that you will forgive. As a person, I want to let you know that's exactly what happened to me. When I understood this for the first time. Didn't learn it at college, didn't learn at graduate school. Didn't learn at postgraduate school. It's in black and white. In Matthew chapter 18, Jesus says this, "And his master was angry," because they brought this middleman back to the King. And this man's friends told the King what he did, even though he got compassion. And his master, the top man was angry. And listen to those words. What did the King then do?

"And delivered him to the torturers." That's the literal Greek word, the torturers. "Until," until: time word, "Until he should pay all that was due to him." Most people think the parable ends there. The parable doesn't end there. That's getting ready for the kicker. The kicker is the next verse. Listen to what he says. Jesus says, "So, in the same way, my heavenly father also will do to you," throw you to be tortured, "if each of you from his heart..." You can't forgive from your head or will because you were wounded in your heart. You weren't wounded in your head. You're wounded in your heart. "from your heart does not forgive another human being his trespasses against you." The wounds that

he caused. What does Jesus say? You want to know why you forgive 70 times seven, because my father is so big on forgiveness, because what it cost him to forgive me was the death of his son.

He has a short fuse about this. And he says, "listen, I want you to forgive. And if you do not forgive, I personally won't torment you, but I will deliver you, delegate to you, torture." Same Hebrew word, same Greek word. "Until, until you forgive." You mean the torture continues? Yes, it does. That's why Americans in particular are so filled with torment. Not four people out of a hundred have no unforgiveness today. Not four, we did a lot of research on this. And because of that, torment continues. But because we do not think that our unforgiveness affects our personal life. Because we stuff it and we disconnect something Jesus connected. If you do this, I promise you, my father will do this. For how long? Until you forgive each of the people that have wounded you, listen carefully, for each of the things they did.

Each of his trespasses, not just, "I forgive that person." That won't work. They didn't say forgive the person. He said, "Forgive the trespasses." So what happens? God, the father, on earth stops forgiving you and me of our sins. And those unforgiven sins are doors. They're entrances for torment. And they remain open. And no matter how much you pray, God will not break his decree. His decree is, if you don't forgive, I'm delivering you to be tormented. Not because God wants you to be tormented, but because he must see his children forgive. Many of you in this room keep getting no's and your life has got so much anxiety, and no matter what you pray or how much you do, God seems to have a closed mind. He doesn't, he has a broken heart. You got to go back, I went back, and make your list of all the people who wounded you.

It was more than a page for me. And then I had to think through, what did they do that wounded me? I have to forgive the person for what they did. Jesus gave the five requirements for God to stop the torment in the same parable in Matthew 18. That's why many of you who have tried to forgive and say, "I forgive that person for everything they did." And you know what? You see them again, and you say, "Oh no, I need to forgive him again." You know that happens? You didn't follow the five steps that Jesus requires. When you do the text in Matthew 18, the Greek text, says not you continue to forgive the person, not you occasionally have to forgive the person. It's you forgive them once. And as a person who's done this and has helped 6,000 tribe leaders in Uganda come together, and black workers and white farmers in Namibia, the whole country was going to explode, brought them together, 2000 of them, they forgave.

President got on the television or radio and said, "Our crisis is over. There'll be no war." Forgiveness. You have a rebellious child. You know why they're rebellious? You wounded them, whether you knew it or not. And then that slide of unforgiveness that I write about in the book, *The Freedom Factor*, happens to everyone. And the seventh stage in the slide is called vengeance. And your child takes out vengeance on you, because they didn't forgive you. And they went down those seven steps that always happen, and the last one is to get even. And

then you say to your spouse, "What on earth happened to our son or daughter?" That's what happened. They go into torment. You experiment torment because you have unforgiveness toward them. This is why churches split. You cannot have a couple divorce unless there's a root of unforgiveness between them.

It's impossible. They will not divorce. And you are in my prayers. If you're a man who really is results oriented, and you like getting results, obey what he said, abide, and take care of all this stuff. And when you're done, you say this sentence, "Before God, I have forgiven everyone for everything." You're making a legal statement in the heavenlies, then be quiet and listen. And God will bring you a couple others. Process through them. Then say it again, "Before God, I have forgiven everyone for everything." And when you have peace, you say to God, "I hereby officially confess my sin of unforgiveness, of anger, of bitterness, of slander, of resentment, of hatred and of vengeance." And when you confess those sins, all sins that have piled up are forgiven, and the torment ends. This is the number one reason, in my opinion, having studied this for years, why God says no. How many need to forgive?

Come on. It's all right. Will you take that piece of paper? Get ready. Take three cups of Starbucks. Another one of those chocolate desserts from last night, and make your list. Then take each person. What are the wounds I have to forgive? Separate the person, release this person, forgive the debts, confess your own sins and say to God, "Call it off." And heaven will rejoice.

Father in heaven, we want yeses. You made us to want yeses. You gave us desire. We are not to lose our desire. We are to have proper desires. And we are the ones that you have said to rule the world for you, with you. And because we have sinned with unforgiveness so deeply, race to race, government to people, tribes, wealthy to poor. There's so many wounds in so many people's hearts, hundreds of them in some cases. And no matter what we do, trying to fix our inner turmoil and distress, we get no yes from you because we've disconnected it from the cause. "I will not forgive you. And I will not break the legal decree of torment until you forgive everyone, every trespass."

May you give every man, that's hearing my voice, the hope that this is an answer, that's a big one. It's a big one. And to give to us courage, to sit on a bench right here in Washington, DC with a piece of paper. And with humility, sit in your presence and say, "Oh God, I've messed up, big time. Lots of unforgiveness. Forgive me for stuffing it." And then listen as your Spirit lists the people and you help us list the sins or the wounds. And then you'll guide us through forgiving. We bless you. And then Lord, I've found you love saying yes. Ask whatever you want and it shall be done to you. We unblock it. We unblock it today. We begin it in our lives, and our families. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Roger Marsh:

Well, you've been listening to a captivating message from Dr. Bruce Wilkinson on today's edition of Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and I'm joined now by our host, Dr. James Dobson, and Doctor, you were sitting in the audience, listening

to Dr. Wilkinson when he originally gave this presentation, what are your thoughts on what he shared?

Dr. Dobson: I absolutely loved that message. And I'm sure many of you did too. Talking about forgiveness, which is something we all need to give thought to. I mean, in everybody's life. There's been a moment when somebody has really done you wrong, has cheated you or insulted you, or taken something that belonged to them. There are many ways that people can hurt you, and hurt those that you love. And when it occurs, the scripture makes it clear that we're not to harbor anger and resentment, but we're to turn it over to the Lord, and forgive that person. It's one of the hardest things you'll ever have to do.

Roger Marsh: Well, that is right Dr. Dobson, indeed. I hope everyone listening today will apply these truths to your everyday walk with the Lord. You can learn more about Dr. Bruce Wilkinson and the various organizations he's involved with by visiting our broadcast page at DrJamesdobson.org. Let us know what you thought about this program by connecting with us on Facebook. You can find our profile by searching for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Once you're there, be sure to comment on today's broadcast post and let us know what you learned from today's program. Again, that's Facebook.com and then look for Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk. We look forward to hearing from you there. Well, that brings us to the end of our broadcast week. Thanks so much for listening and for your support of this ministry, we are completely listener supported, and we rely on your prayers and your financial generosity to continue doing this God honoring work. For more information on how you can stand with us financially. Visit us online at DrJamesdobson.org. That's DrJamesdobson.org. Or call (877) 732-6825. That's (877) 732-6825. And from all of us here at the James Dobson Family Institute, have a healthy and blessed weekend.

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